# THE FANTASY OF PEER GYNT



INTERPRETED BY

I. M. PAGAN

# PEER GYNT

Pagan
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# THE FANTASY OF PEER GYNT

BEING SELECTIONS FROM THE DRAMATIC POEM
"PEER GYNT"

BY

HENRIK IBSEN

DONE INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY

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TO THE BRIGHT BAND OF WILLING WORKERS

WHO HELPED IN THE FIRST PRODUCTION OF THESE SCENES,

THIS VOLUME

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED BY THEIR STAGE-MANAGER

# INTRODUCTION

THE following selections from Ibsen's dramatic poem of *Peer Gynt* are the outcome of a practical attempt to produce that drama. Both the commentary and the cuts have consequently been made from the point of view of the stage manager; and even the suggestions given as to a possible inner meaning for the play are due to careful observation of the scenes during rehearsal,[1] rather than to any preconceived ideas or solitary study.

The first British performance of the play was given in the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, on 14th February 1908, under the auspices of the Edinburgh Lodge of the Theosophical Society; the title rôle being taken by Mr John Darlison, and most of the other parts by amateurs. The dialogue then used had been hastily transcribed for the occasion from the translations already existing in French and English; and though it stood the test of delivery wonderfully well, it was found that far too much had been attempted, and that the pruning-knife would have to be freely used before any repetition of the performance could be thought of. The stage-manager, by that time thoroughly enamoured of her work, determined to apply herself diligently to the study of Norwegian, and, after reading and re-reading the scenes in their original form, set to work again, remodelling the lines and revising the cuts, and always keeping before her the practical difficulties she herself had been called upon to face. The scenes here given differ considerably from those played, certain passages having been withdrawn, and others substituted. At one time the use of rhyme throughout was contemplated, but it was feared that monotony might result, and the idea was abandoned; the unrhymed scenes being for the most part given in approximately the same *measure* as in the original—the plan followed also in the well-known translation by the Messrs Archer. In several scenes, consequently, the two versions run closely parallel, the differences that exist being due to difference of aim; for the Messrs Archer worked primarily for the scholar and the student, striving always for verbal accuracy, and choosing phrases

[1] It was while watching the Trolls rehearse that the manager first realised that the scene represented delirium, and while listening to the Moulder that she grasped the fact that Peer was already dead.

that suggest the actual Norwegian construction; while the stage-manager contented herself with faithfulness to the sequence of thought, and had always before her mind the necessity of achieving euphonious lines, suitable for delivery in a large building. Further, she limited herself to the main outline of the story, and must consequently refer readers who wish to ponder the whole play to the work of the translators aforesaid,[1] to which she was indebted for her first introduction to Ibsen, and which greatly facilitated her study of Norse. Her rendering does not attempt to compete with theirs in word-for-word fidelity, especially in the rhymed scenes; but it may be urged, in defence of a free translation, that a lyrical scene cannot really be faithfully rendered in blank verse, for the spirit of it must inevitably be sacrificed.

And this question of rhyme is a more perplexing and important one for the translator than may at first sight appear; for rhyme is ornament, and a word that graces a line in the original may positively disfigure it in translation. Let the reader try to imagine half-a-dozen of Browning's quaintest and most out-of-the-way rhymes translated soberly and literally into French for the benefit of some Parisian student of literature totally unfamiliar with English. Such treatment would in many cases ruin the passage, robbing it of all beauty and propriety, and leaving the reader both puzzled and contemptuous. Browning's trick of audacious and far-fetched rhyme is common in Ibsen, and a large number of words which strike the English reader as out of place in the translation are not only pardonable but admirable as used by him, because they are delightfully daring and yet pleasing to the ear. For instance, the words "snout" and "hen" introduced into two of the most important and effective passages of the drama are hideous monosyllables in English, while their Norse representatives are musical dissyllables—Tryne and Høne—the soft modified vowels of which allow the voice to linger on them with ease. The word snout has, in this edition, simply been discarded. The hen was more difficult to abolish, because of the importance of the underlying thought. The word occurs in the farewell scene between mother and son, when, just at the moment of Åse's death, Peer, absorbed in the fanciful idea that he has accompanied her to the gate of heaven, begs St Peter to let her enter free, acknowledging that he himself is unworthy to accom-

[1] *Peer Gynt, a Dramatic Poem*, published by Mr Wm. Heinemann.

pany her, and adding to his confession of frequent falsehood the penitent admission—

> "And I have railed at my mother as a hen,
> Because she cackled and crew."

Any British audience hearing that statement suddenly made, just at the most impressive moment of a quite unforgettable scene, would take the lines as an insult both to sentiment and to intelligence; for the average Englishman does not call his mother a hen; and besides, hens do not, normally, crow. No English poet of any standing, from Chaucer right down to the present day, would ever have dreamt of suggesting that they did. The shock is considerably aggravated by the sharpness and poverty in music of the words "cackled and crew." The hundred and one variations of the crooning whirr and warning cluck of the barnyard mother —these admonitions and self-congratulations which seem, to the restless chick intent on adventures, so very tiresome and uncalled for—are not even remotely suggested by our dictionary rendering of the words; whereas the Norwegian phrase, "Kagled og gol," gives, at least to the ear, exactly the right effect. At the Edinburgh performance the passage was simply omitted, together with part of the preceding description of St Peter's reception of the travellers, and Peer's daring rendering of the imaginary voice of the Deity, which might possibly have been offensive to a Scottish audience. In the present version the lines have been replaced; but it is the conviction of the translator that even in the modified form here suggested there is not one actor in a thousand who will deliver them successfully, *i.e.* without in some measure losing the sympathy of his hearers. That unlucky hen is a hopeless[1] alien in such a passage, and no amount of coaxing will make her feel at home; and the whole significance of the speech—so human and natural—is lost by the sudden jolt which wakens up the critical faculties, and concentrates their attention on a trifle.

In translating for the stage, it is also necessary to guard against the use of words which, in addition to the drawback of poverty in vowel music, suffer from the more serious handicap of ridiculous

[1] In some districts of North Britain the use of the word as an appellative is, however, permissible, if duly qualified by a couple of adjectives. The Scottish peasant not infrequently addresses his baby daughter as "ma bonnie wee hen," and, on fitting occasion, will even apostrophise the wife of his bosom as "Ye daft auld hen," and that without any intention of unkindness.

associations. Thus, "button" and "fiddle" and "ladle" have all done duty again and again in comic songs, and the two former have been further cheapened by popular use in such phrases as "fiddle-faddle," "fiddle-sticks," and "not worth a button." The word fiddle has in this edition been avoided by a paraphrase, though not without loss of imagery. The Button-Moulder and his ladle are recurrent and indispensable; and it is distinctly unfortunate that his title and implement give to the English reader a first impression of low comedy—of something absurd and grotesque. Those who have seen the play realise that there is nothing undignified in this Moulder of Buttons. He is a craftsman, a worker in precious metals; the artist who provides part of the ornamental element in the festive apparel of the Scandinavian and Northern Celt. When he makes his quiet entrance, in his homely workman's garb and leathern apron, with the symbol of his craft in his hand, and stands face to face with Peer, the spectator is even conscious of a certain feeling of awe and reverence; for here is the representative of a mighty power. This, in fact, is "The Shaper" of an older Mythology—the Moulder, *par excellence*; and such we may call him, dropping the unfortunate "Button" as frequently as possible.

The translator has also omitted or paraphrased all lines which, outside of Norway, require a footnote for their elucidation; and also such passages as are unsuited to delivery on the English stage because of their unconventional frankness. The North is plain-spoken and rough-tongued; and though it would be absurd to condemn this drama as coarse, there are a few short passages in it which would lose in effectiveness if given literally in English, because the audience, on hearing them, would be so busy feeling scandalised and wondering whether it ought to go home, that it would fail to note the power of the thought and the significance of the situation. Rightly or wrongly, we have, for some generations past, forbidden the use of certain words in our spoken drama, while leaving our authors almost complete liberty in the matter of ideas hinted at or suggested; and so fixed has this tradition become that the efforts of certain of our modern writers to break through it have only resulted in the weakening of their would-be strong scenes. In this play one of the strongest and most dramatic situations is to be found in Peer's second dialogue with the "Green-Clad One," when she suddenly confronts him with the hideous mis-

shapen elemental, which represents, on the astral plane, the result of his treachery to Ingrid. These lines as they stand are impossible from the stage-manager's point of view, although they are far too important to be omitted. The transcriber, after much cogitation, decided, in rendering them and the corresponding passage in the Troll-scene, to emphasise as strongly as possible the fact—abundantly evident to any careful student of the poem—that the scene is astral or "psychic," and not physical, and so to lift the passage out of all danger of a merely gross and material interpretation into the region of the weird and uncanny. Anyone who disputes the necessity for some such modification in the phraseology may set his doubts at rest by discussing the poem with a sufficient number of English readers who only know the play from having read it through once or twice in translation. It will be found that it has never occurred to the majority of them that the Troll and Boyg scenes represent fever and delirium, or that the portion of the fifth act here described as "epilogue" concerns Peer's life after death. "In Norway most of us take psychic things for granted," a Norseman explained to a friend of the writer; but John Bull's ideas run in a different groove, and the psychic element in *Peer Gynt* must be driven home to him, by clearness of phraseology, by artistic care in delivery, and by everything that stage-craft can do for it in the way of setting, mounting, and lighting.

The above modification is the gravest and most audacious which the transcriber has permitted herself. But a few minor "Bowdlerisations" will be found here and there. Thus the passage in which the Troll-king describes the disgusting nature of the refreshments offered to Peer stands condemned thrice over when translated; firstly, as being unsuited to the conventions of the English stage, for all such passages in Shakespeare are invariably omitted by our best actors; secondly, as containing a hit at local Norwegian politics, which is pointless in England; and thirdly, because of our ignorance of Scandinavian folklore. Cow-dung and similar filth is the orthodox and traditional fare offered by the Trolls to unwary mortals who have strayed into their domains; so that what would strike a British audience as the unnecessary and wanton introduction of something offensive and disgusting, appeals to the Norseman as a familiar element in the story, glossed over with a certain amount of neatness. It is therefore in no spirit of foolish prudery that certain slight liberties have been taken with the text, but

simply and solely with a view to breaking down barriers due to differences of race, language, and tradition, and so bringing the thoughts of the poet as near to the hearts of the audience as possible.

Possibly the most serious of the many divergences in national sentiment that require consideration in our present study is to be found when we contrast the English and Norwegian points of view with regard to Ingrid's action in eloping with Peer; for it must be remembered that she went with him of her own free will, breaking her troth, and leaving her accepted bridegroom in the lurch. Should any relatively wealthy young heiress in any rural district—and still more in any provincial town—of England muster sufficient courage to follow her example, she will find scant sympathy and support from her relatives and friends, especially if her lover subsequently abandons her. In nine cases out of ten, in fact, she will simply be swept into the mud amid a contemptuous chorus of "Serve her right," and probably never dare to show her face again, even to her own father; the real reason for such severity being, that this imaginary English Ingrid is sinning not only against the letter of the law, but against the customs, traditions, and most sacred ideals of her country and race. The Norwegian Ingrid returns home confident of the sympathy and support of the whole countryside; and she gets it. The parish turns out as one man to track her betrayer, determined to lynch him if found; and the law approves this action by passing sentence of death upon him, and confiscating the whole of his property.

We have to look very deep down for the reasons of such a tremendous cleavage as this, and we shall understand them best by examining in detail the typically southern point of view as regards marriage, *e.g.* that of Rome, and contrasting it with the opinions and sentiments of the North. The city of the plains develops the priest and the politician, the cathedral, the law-court, rites, ceremonies, officialism, and formulæ. The mountain brings forth the prophet and the seer, and the man of strong will, self-reliance, and independent judgment, who has leisure to examine every case on its own merits, and pronounces on it for himself. In the South, the blood is hot, the passions strong, and very often short-lived; and the prudent parent, to make sure that the marriage of his child shall be binding—whether it turns out congenial or not—and that his daughter shall have a legal right

to recognition and financial support for herself and for her children, draws up a contract with hair-splitting care, and brings in the aid of notary and witness, seal and signature, to make everything secure. Further, he invokes the aid of the priest—who is always at hand—and the deed is made irrevocable by a solemn function *before* the union takes place; and *until that is over*, the young people are not even allowed to converse with each other, without the restraining presence of a duly constituted chaperon. The church naturally proceeds to elaborate the ritual; insists on the absolute necessity of a fully ordained priest of the orthodox persuasion; declares the ceremony invalid unless it takes place in a consecrated building, and gradually converts the simple benediction of the bridal pair into a sacrament. And after all that is done, original sin asserts itself, and unregenerate man simply turns all such regulations upside down, and reads them backwards; extracting from these wise restrictions a free permission to kick into the gutter any woman he tires of, if one jot or one tittle of the customary procedure has been overlooked. The fact that she has been a loyal and faithful wife to him for years, and is the mother of several children, counts, in some cases, for next to nothing.

In the North, on the contrary, what constitutes marriage is not mere compliance with certain formulæ connected with dry technicalities of law, or solemnities of religious ceremonial, but simply the earnest desire and firm intention of two people, who already know each other, to pass their whole lives together as man and wife. The typical Northerner chooses his mate for himself, very frequently without consulting even his own nearest relatives; and if he cannot obtain the consent of the parents of his beloved, he marries her all the same, dispensing with contract and dowry, and looking down with scorn and contempt on the man who expects his wife to provide for him—or even for herself. In Scotland [1] to-day—a land of mountains and of sparse population, where many of the inhabitants live miles away from priest and notary and city temple—a perfectly *legal* though irregular marriage is constituted by the man's simple declaration before two witnesses that the woman beside him is his wife; and she has only to bow her head in assent to confirm it. This form is frequently resorted to by the poorer classes, for economy or convenience, especially in

[1] *N.B.*—This does not apply to any other country in the British Empire.

cases where the relatives are opposed; and the social and religious functions—if they take place at all—may follow weeks or even months later; the latter being regarded not as a *sacrament*, but merely as a solemn benediction of the bridal pair, and therefore coming quite suitably after the actual marriage has taken place.

Such customs—the outgrowth of climate and of race—are naturally more accentuated in Norway, where the dwellings lie still farther apart, and no form of merry-making on a large scale can possibly take place comfortably, except in summer, when the roads are passable and the days long. The young couple are often, in consequence, actually, though not formally, married, long before the religious ceremony, which concludes the fortnight of feasting, takes place. For them the really sacramental moment is that in which heart answers to heart, and the troth is plighted; and in some districts ancient tradition is still kept up by the bridegroom's daring abduction of the not unwilling bride very soon after the betrothal ceremony is over.

The actors who take part in *Peer Gynt* must grasp the above facts if they are going to do anything like justice to the Ingrid episode. They will never understand, or make their audience understand, her point of view unless they assume for the time being Northern ideals, and realise just how deeply Peer had sinned. It must be remembered that he had dangled round Ingrid till his attentions, and her preference for him over her other admirers, were the talk of the country-side; and had then gone off heedlessly for long weeks, leaving her to the derision and probably also to the rough chaff of the neighbours; and though we cannot defend the foolish pride that made her imagine she could actually marry a fool like Mads, in order to spite Peer, we can understand it. As a matter of fact, she finds that she cannot carry it through, and, even before Peer arrives on the scene, she has told Mads so; breaking into a storm of tears, and forbidding him the bridegroom's right of free entrance into her private domain.[1] No one shows her any sympathy. The laughing guests merely take her tears for granted as a comedy of maiden reluctance; and when she is fairly desperate with untold shame and misery, the man she loves suddenly appears with protestations of affection and the offer of a rescue. True to the custom of her

[1] The storehouse is generally set apart for the bride and her belongings at Norwegian weddings.

country—or at any rate to its oldest traditions—she goes with him in absolute trust, expecting the formal marriage to follow her acceptance of him as her husband. It is small wonder that she cannot believe what he says when he heartlessly repudiates her next morning, and no wonder at all that the whole male population turns out to avenge her. For if the careful precautions of Rome are all required and utterly insufficient to ensure justice being done by men to women, the more casual ways of the North are still more open to abuse; and the only possible check on such abuse is the healthiness of a public opinion which accepts literally the teaching of the MASTER, that a man's yea shall be yea, and his nay, nay; that his simple word shall be as binding on his actions as his solemn oath or the fetters of the law.

In defence of the further audacity of docking a great drama of one whole act and several scenes, it may be urged once more that this is, or attempts to be, an acting edition, and that a complete English version already exists. To stage the whole play in any but its original form would be a waste of time and energy. However careful and conscientious a translation may be, "The best in this kind are but shadows," and to treat such a shadow with the same reverence as the original would be absurd; in addition to which, *Peer Gynt* is much longer than *Hamlet*, and would take about six[1] hours to play. Ibsen himself cut it extensively when it was produced in Christiania under his own direction, for it was not originally intended for the stage; and other managers will naturally follow his example, varying the cuts in accordance with the scale and circumstances of production, and choosing such passages as are best suited to the time, place, and audience, besides duly considering the capabilities of the company and the cost of production. Such a masterpiece naturally merits the best of renderings and most careful of settings, but it is not dependent upon extravagance of dress or scenery, and can hold its audience, and even move it deeply, without the aid of elaborate setting, so long as the acting is natural and sincere, intelligent and sympathetic. At least a fair rendering of Grieg's beautiful music is desirable and, indeed, even indispensable to the success of some of the scenes. Solveig's songs and the various preludes and dances, together with the scene-shifting, will occupy about an hour, which leaves barely two hours at the very most for actual dialogue.

[1] Including the music and dances.

Cuts are indicated by asterisks or suggested by square brackets, and deliberate reading aloud is the manager's safest test for timing the scenes beforehand, for at rehearsal it is quite impossible to judge how long the performance will take.

On the chance that other amateur companies may be found sufficiently ambitious to undertake the production of the play, the stage directions of the Edinburgh prompt copy are retained; those which are distinguished by an asterisk are to be found in the original, and therefore carry weight, though, naturally, not quite so much weight as is given by actors to the more careful and elaborate instructions printed in such of Ibsen's plays as were written for the stage and produced before being published. It is to be hoped that an edition of *Peer Gynt*, giving the author's stage-directions as followed at the first production, may one day be given to the world, for a considerable addition to the descriptive matter is required before the foreign reader is in a position to realise fully the action and setting of these scenes. The following extracts from a letter written by a Norwegian actress who has assisted at the representations of the play will make this sufficiently evident. The writer tells us that "The Hall of the Dovrë King—the spirit world (*sic*)—is full of huge-bodied animals, such as elephants, boars, serpents, bears, and such like. That is to say, that people come on the stage as animals; they must, of course, have the forms made so as to allow of free movement, and naturally they must make the appropriate animal sounds." The actor who undertakes to make "the appropriate animal sound" of the elephant must have rather an arduous time of it; but perhaps, considering that in these Northern latitudes the elephant ought to belong to the mammoth species, the stage-manager may sometimes prove merciful and allow a little judicious assistance from the orchestra! It is interesting to note that these animals belong to the religious[1] symbolism of the North, and that their forms are found rudely carved on many monuments of undoubted antiquity in several parts of Scotland.

Another difficulty associated with the production of this play in an alien tongue arises from the fact that a foreign audience is unfamiliar with Norwegian costumes and customs, manners and dress, and, consequently, cannot readily place the characters in

[1] Swedenborg, the Scandinavian mystic, declared that the spirit world of his visions had in it many animals. It is of course probable that Ibsen knew something of his writings.

their true positions and relationship to each other. For the student the difficulty hardly exists, partly because Ibsen has helped his readers in many instances by using descriptive titles instead of names, *i.e.* by indicating the speakers as "the bride," "the bridegroom," "the farmer," "the feast-master," and so forth. In Christiania these personages are recognised at a glance; whereas, when the curtain rises on the wedding-scene in an English theatre, the house is dazed and confused by the variety and novelty of the costumes, and only begins to distinguish the various characters after they have spoken several times. Yet their speedy identification is counted on by the poet, and is dramatically most desirable. Mads Moen's childish stupidity loses half its value if the audience fails to realise that this semi-imbecile is Peer's successful rival; and apart from his distinctive costume — unmistakable to a Norseman—we have nothing to help us but the very briefest of descriptions in the opening scene; for the author, secure of his recognition, allows Peer to dismiss him with one contemptuous word—"*That Kvindfolkskræmsel!*"—for which there is no exact English equivalent. *Kvind* is woman—presumably our Scottish word *quean* in Scandinavian dress—and *folk*, here, is used in the genitive case. *Skræmsel* is an expression of contempt as well as of dislike, and is translated either as bugbear or scarecrow; carries, in fact, just that suggestion of objectionable laughing-stock which prepares us for Mads' appearance. The word has consequently to be expanded into a phrase in translation, and even then our English Peer must do his best with it to ensure the prompt awakening of interest in an audience to whom Mads' gay attire means nothing in particular. This expansion is only one of innumerable instances in which it has been found impossible to preserve the Scandinavian terseness without loss of meaning; and though at times the tables are turned, and some Norwegian phrase or proverbial expression is swallowed whole by one pregnant English word, such cases are rare; for the farther we penetrate into the regions of ice and snow, the less men care to open their mouths; their surroundings, naturally, tending to develop the power of thought transference without much aid from speech; but, on the other hand, such words as they do utter are full of significance, and carry great weight.

So far, we have looked at the play from the point of view of the stage-manager; but if it is to be produced effectively, it must also be studied from the point of view of the artists who are to

interpret it; and their first question—if they are artists in the true sense of the word—must always be, "What is the impression which the author wishes us to convey to the public? or rather, What impression does he wish us to leave with the public when our work is done? Is our chief concern with action, emotion, or thought? Is there any key to the inner meaning of the play? Any clue which will guide us through the labyrinth of our hero's chaotic speculations, and help us to find that will-o'-the-wisp which haunts him throughout, viz., his Ego, the unknown 'Self' of his musings and monologues?"

Has *Peer Gynt* a key? and how far is it legitimate to insist on the mystic interpretation of a work of art for which the author has emphatically disclaimed any hidden or esoteric meaning whatever? The question is most fitly answered by another: How far is it possible for a poet, writing in the full flow of what is loosely termed inspiration, to gauge, fully and accurately, the value—on all the planes—of what he has written?

"*Peer Gynt*," says Ibsen, "came as though of itself"; and the words are worth consideration. Tired out after the strain of composing *Brand*, he sought the relaxation and refreshment that come with change of theme and of scene, and, choosing a congenial subject and sending his critical faculties off for a holiday, he let his pen go. There, in the lovely surroundings of Frascati, Casamicciola, and Sorrento, the wonderful drama-fantasia grew and developed, flowing forth in living verse, spontaneous, musical, full of vitality and energy; decked and adorned with all the graces given by elaborate rhyme and double-rhyme. The result was published straight away, unpruned and unsifted, pretty much "as it came."

The phenomenon of an author who disclaims personal responsibility for some particular composition is familiar to all students of poetic literature; and it is noteworthy that very frequently the poem or drama associated with such a disclaimer is not only one of the said author's greatest achievements, but is strikingly and characteristically his own; *i.e.* more definitely stamped with the mark of his individuality than any of his other works. It is as if the larger man—the subliminal self of the psychologist—had somehow got a free hand for once, and using the outer self, or limited personality, as a channel, had poured through it something of the higher wisdom and wider knowledge that lay within his reach. The disclaimer is only the protest of the personality,

conscious of a driving force beyond his ken. The poet knows that the work is his own; as is abundantly evident as soon as it is clumsily or uncomprehendingly handled by the critics.

Ibsen's outburst of feeling, in a letter written to Björnson soon after certain early reviews of *Peer Gynt* had appeared, will appeal to the hearts of most literary men. Not what was said, but what was omitted stung him. He had done good work, and he knew it; was its quality to be ignored that more space might be left for harping on the flaws? The dramatist's attitude in the matter gives a comical suggestion of some tailor, skilled in the technicalities of his craft, who has achieved a beautiful garment and cannot get anyone to appreciate what he considers its best points. "Can none of you see that my coat is well made?" he demands. "Is not the material good; are not the parts well proportioned; the seams in the right place? Is it not efficient as a covering; will it not clothe you and warm you?" And the critics and the public turn a deaf ear, and concentrate all their attention on the wonderful embroidery that adorns it—outlandish braidings and fantastic garnishings, picked up, he hardly knows where, and used just because they lay to hand; ornament which he himself is half-inclined to condemn as extravagant and unnecessary.

And yet as long at *Peer Gynt* is read, as it will be in many tongues and for many a generation to come, it will be on this same fantastic embroidery that the attention of its readers is concentrated. Gazing at the coat complete, we forget the cleverness of the cut and the durability of the material, and stand amazed before the wonder of the colouring, the richness of the adornment, and above all, the suggestive shimmer of its inner lining, which gleams forth unexpectedly ever and anon, till the spectator is seized with an irresistible impulse to turn the garment inside out, and see whether this same iridescent loveliness may not after all prove to be on the right side, in spite of the protests of the indignant fashioner.

In defence of such audacity it may be urged that the material itself was woven by many hands before Ibsen touched it; and that the poet who draws folk-lore into his drama may put it to admirable use without realising its significance. Peer Gynt is a hero of Norse legend, whose chief exploits are concerned with the driving out and destruction of the Troll monsters which infest the farms and sheep-cotes round his home. Ibsen elaborates this thread, giving it a curious twist as he spins it, and works into the strand the

drama of Peer's own life, and also an elaborate analysis of the gradual progress of his moral and spiritual evolution from early youth to extreme old age, right to the gates of death and beyond them.

The chief characters in the drama proper are Åse, the hard-working, anxious-minded widow; Peer Gynt, her scapegrace son, the hero of the piece; Ingrid, the only child and heiress of the wealthy farmer of Hegstad; Mads Moen, the nincompoop son of a well-to-do couple near by; and Aslak, the roystering and popular young smith of the village. Ingrid is sought in marriage by Mads Moen, but prefers the ne'er-do-well Peer, who, however, misses his chance by his truant absence at the critical time, and returns from hunting in the mountains to find Mads accepted as bridegroom and the wedding preparations well advanced. Stung by his mother's reproaches he attends the wedding in a spirit of defiance, carries off the bride under the bridegroom's nose, and takes her away to the forest; only, however, to repudiate her and send her home next day.

His farm and land are forfeited by law and handed over to the outraged father of Ingrid. Åse dies, broken-hearted, after a short interview with her erring son, and Peer leaves Norway for America. He goes through many vicissitudes; tries Hudson Bay fur-hunting, gold-digging, and other pursuits, finally making a huge fortune in the slave-trade. He travels in Africa; loses the bulk of his money there, and the rest of it on his way back to Norway, where he arrives, shipwrecked and penniless, a broken-down old man, unrecognisable by any of his former friends.

Death is the theme from this point onwards. Peer listens first to the funeral oration pronounced at the grave of a humble peasant whom he had seen as a lad; a youth who like himself had been called upon to protect and cherish the girl he had betrayed, and who had forfeited the respect of his fellow-men, and turned a deaf ear to the call of his fatherland in time of war, in order to remain by the side of his beloved and work for her and for their child. A grey-haired old pastor tells the story of the right hand maimed in order to avoid conscription and separation from "those most near and dear," and sums up with gentle charity:

> It is not ours to search the heart and reins;—
> That is no task for dust, but for our Judge.
> Yet dare I freely, firmly, speak my hope,
> He scarce stands crippled now before his God.

The scene changes to the familiar homestead of the first act, and Peer finds himself a spectator at the auction which follows the funeral of Ingrid, the whilom heiress of Hegstad, who has died, unloved and unlamented, leaving Aslak, decked out in the garb of mourning, to rejoice over her departure. Apparently the jovial smith has felt quite equal to consoling the heiress for Peer's desertion, and has learned, like many another man who has married for money, that there was "a lock to the storehouse door." Peer watches his boyhood's playthings and treasures—which had passed into the possession of Hegstad at the time of the outlawry—knocked down, one after another, for an old song; and in an outburst of bitter feeling he puts up to burlesque auction those other more intangible but equally real possessions—his dreams, his ideals, his unattained hopes, and the fruits, such as they are, of his past experiences. The young peasants crowd round him, entertained, curious, half-admiring, half-contemptuous, and listen to his auctioneering much as their grandparents had listened to his rhodomontade at the wedding fifty years before; but he breaks from them and disappears, flinging at them a jesting tale that covers an insult.

Then follows the end. Alone in the forest the old man creeps about, gathering wild onions or setting snares to eke out his scanty diet, and turning over in his mind the while, with slowly dawning comprehension, the various experiences through which he has lived. From poverty to wealth, from outlawry to power, and back again to obscurity and insignificance, he passes his whole life in review, and in bitterness of heart pronounces it a failure.

So far we have dealt only with the thread of action in the drama; but the cord the poet has spun for us is threefold, made out of action, of emotion, and of thought; *i.e.* of the activities corresponding to the physical, astral, and mental planes; or, in more familiar parlance, to the life of the body, the soul, and the spirit.

The thread of action or enterprise unravelled, we pass to the thread of desire or emotion, and come at once into close touch with astral and psychic experiences; and the first thing to notice is the twist in the thread aforesaid. The original Peer Gynt conquers the Trolls. In Ibsen's version he only fancies that he has done so. Evasion is not victory, says the poet, and the hobgoblins haunt the hero till the last page of the play is reached. This Troll-motive first appears immediately after Peer's repudia-

tion of Ingrid. Bent on stifling the voice of conscience and the gentle but still more compelling voice of aspiration which begins to make itself heard, he plunges into wild dissipation, which, followed by a fall and a stunning blow on the head, results in high fever and delirium—an experience dramatically rendered in the scenes with the Trolls. "Deep down in the Rondë" Peer meets, and woos, and then forsakes, the Troll king's daughter, a shadowy, astral counterpart of Ingrid. Marriage with her means wealth and ease and comfort, marred by the loss of self-respect and the necessity for a squinting, cross-eyed outlook on life—a deliberate choice of partial blindness, to prevent his seeing his wife as she really is. Realising this, he throws off the Troll damsel, much in the same spirit of reckless egotism and defiance in which he had sent Ingrid back to her father, and after almost succumbing to the delirious rage of the Trolls, sinks into the dreary state of apathy and inertia which precedes the return from the ravings of high fever to full consciousness on the physical plane. It is at this point that he encounters the great Boyg—a Troll monster taken direct from folk-lore, and used by the poet with marvellous skill as the embodiment of that state of weakness, hopelessness, and dreary depression which handicaps the early stages of convalescence. The Great Boyg, or "Bowed One," a mere voice in the darkness—"not so much as a shape,—yet all slimy and dim"—counsels acquiescence. Why fight against anything? Submit—evade, let things slide! "Go roundabout!" And later in the drama the creature's words are always quoted when the hero feels that he is losing heart. The monster almost conquers—already the hungry vultures circle around hoarsely proclaiming his triumph—but Peer makes a wild appeal to the Highest he knows, and the answering sound of a softly chanted psalm, and the sweet tones of church bells, herald his awakening on the physical plane; a comfortless awakening to the aching head and the parched throat, and the prosaic desire—Oh bathos of insistent realism!—for a pickled herring.

The warfare of these Troll scenes is emphatically astral. Desire encounters desire, and the issue of the conflict is doubtful. To wed Ingrid—for Ingrid and the Troll princess are one, and should therefore, be it noted in passing, always be played by the same actress—means the definite acceptance of thraldom. To be the husband of the heiress—of the passionate spoilt child who

has flung herself at his head—involves the circumscribed life, hemmed in, narrow, with no scope in it, and a position of practical dependence intensely uncongenial to his nature.

> I could put up with losing a good many things
> For a bride and a well-managed kingdom to boot;
> But there is a limit to all things on earth,
> And to know one could never find freedom again,
> . . . . . .
> To live on as a hill-troll the whole of one's days,
> No! That is a thing I will never accept.

So he argues with the Troll king, who stands for the father-in-law in this astral debate. The Troll folks' "Enough" can never be his; aspiration asserts itself, and defying the king's counter-assertion that it is too late to draw back, he breaks away and proclaims his independence—a decision ratified on the physical plane later by the building of his own hut in the forest, his acceptance of the doom of the outlaw, and his determination to carve out his own life—a determination which leads to the cynical monologue at the end, when that life is pronounced a failure.

So far the thread of desire has carried us. What of the thread of thought, of spirituality, of aspiration? This thread is one with the central idea of the play—the idea associated with the character of Solveig, the true heroine of the story; and it is worthy of note that it has been possible to tell it twice over, from different standpoints, without so much as mentioning her name, except under the cloak of the word "Aspiration." Solveig and her people move through the drama apart from any of the other characters. They are "the new folk"—"the folk from out Westward." They never converse with anyone—excepting Peer and his mother. The stage is practically cleared for their entrance and passage every time they appear, and it is actually easier to understand their relation to the play if we keep them thus isolated, and interpret them as personifications, and not as personages. Take, then, Peer as the human soul, slowly evolving through variety of experience; Åse as the conscience; —not "the voice of God" as is so often suggested, but simply instinct, *i.e.* the voice of past experience; an excellent guide as to what we ought not to do; but often no guide at all as to what we ought to do. Solveig is the higher self, the divine element which Peer must ultimately wed. Her parents, especially the

father, stand for law in its sterner aspect, and the little sister, Helga, suggests the idea of yearning or aspiration; for it is she who carries the message from the lower to the higher.

Peer first sees Solveig during the wedding feast at Hegstad. She enters as he stands, absorbed and ashamed, in an unwonted fit of humility induced by the taunts and jeers of the wedding guests; and her fairness and sweetness and purity take his breath away. Mystically the moment is the dawning of the sense of sin and the first glimpse of the ideal of perfection. Presently she crosses the stage again—this time to find him wine-flushed and audacious—and with gentle dignity she refuses to dance with him. Not in that way can the higher self ever be reached. At a later point in the play he hears her voice, but his quick elation and resumption of the braggart tone drive her from him ere he can catch a glimpse of her. Law, represented by her parents, forbids her to approach him, and their authority over her does not weaken until he enters the path of action and builds, by the honest toil of his own hands, the sheltering hut wherein she may dwell. The tender rapture of the love-scene follows—a foretaste of final victory—but the wedding is not yet. The parents are still opposed. Outraged law makes its protest, and the memory of Ingrid arises, heralded by the appearance of her counterpart, the Troll princess, bringing with her the hideous misshapen elemental—hating and hated—which represents, on the astral plane, the broken promise and the injury done. After this interview, Peer shrinks even from his beloved Solveig. To approach her thus—"all befouled and bemired"—would be sacrilege, and stricken to the heart he goes back to his mother for comfort.

But conscience can give him none—can only remind him of the misery and desolation his own folly has wrought, and then, having done her part, Åse dies, urging him almost with her last breath to return to Solveig; for when the higher self has once been realised, even if not yet attained, no other guide can be truly followed. Peer, however, in his restlessness and misery feels that such a course is impossible as yet, and wanders far afield, slowly gathering wisdom through the discipline of failure, and the practice of folly.

Ibsen tells us that the whole of the next act was an afterthought, and from the actor's point of view it is intrusive and unnecessary. In the stage versions only brief extracts from it

are ever given, one of them being invariably the scene with Anitra,[1] chosen for its picturesque quality and the chance it offers of dramatic contrast.

During his travels in Africa, Peer comes accross a primitive nomadic tribe, and for a time poses as their prophet and teacher. Anitra, one of the dancing girls belonging to the band, first attracts and then fools our hero—robbing him of valuable jewels; and in the revulsion of feeling which follows he vows that this episode shall be the last of its kind. Anitra represents the gratifications of the lower senses, which in the long run leave a man poorer than they find him—except in experience. Pulling himself together, Peer resolves in future to concentrate his energies entirely on the search for wisdom; to devote himself persistently to the getting of knowledge and understanding; and no sooner is the resolution uttered than a vision of Solveig follows. Gentle, serene, patient, she sits spinning in the door of the hut which he had built for her, singing, softly and tenderly, of the reunion with the beloved which must come some day—if not on earth, then assuredly in heaven; and then the vision fades. There follow Peer's later travels in Egypt, written in a rollicking vein of humour, running to rank burlesque; pseudo-scientific investigation, shallow research and bogus inquiry; archæological and other theories leading nowhere; studies in brain-development ending in horrible experiences in a madhouse, during which the lesson is insistently driven home that egotism *is* insanity, and the supreme egotist the king of lunatics. Next come the voyage home and the terrors of shipwreck, when Peer meets fear face to face, and knows himself for a coward; finally, the return to the old homestead, described above, and the close of the long life summed up in monologue—to be pronounced by the unfortunate actor while slowly stripping an onion of its many layers! The last layer is reached and the cynical assertion made:

> There's no kernel behind,
> Only layers and layers. Naught left in the end.
> Life just plays with us here;—holds out baubles and toys
> Which we snatch at, and grip something else in their stead.

[1] The Edinburgh Company followed tradition and gave extracts from the Anitra scenes, but the stage-manager agreed with her most competent critics that it was a mistake to do so. The Anitra story is a drama complete in itself, and utterly unconnected with the main threads of the plot. Consequently the introduction of extracts from it merely puzzles and worries the audience, for many of whom the play is already sufficiently complicated.

And lo! the voice of Solveig breaks in upon his ear once more, singing within the hut her tender song of love and hope. Bowed down with sorrow and shame he listens in silence, and then rings out the final cry of despair:

> There is one that remembered and one that forgot.
> A soul that has squandered, and one that has saved.
> Heart's bitterness ever! The chance that was lost,
> That can never return!—My true kingdom lay there.

The bitterness of death is past and the drama proper is over. What follows is epilogue; but epilogue so closely knit to the rest that the play is incomplete without it. It begins with what might be called a transition scene—full of beauty, but wild and strange. Peer is "fleeing over the heath," *i.e.* passing quickly from life, through death, to the fuller life beyond the grave; and Ibsen gives us, with his usual faithfulness to fact, a poetic rendering of all that has ever been gathered from the medical and scientific side of the first stage of the journey. Those who have been half-drowned, and then restored to life by artificial means, tell us, if they can tell us anything at all, that they were recalled from contemplating a marvellously vivid and accurate picture of their past life. Thoughts, emotions, and actions, long buried in oblivion, lived again and passed before them in strange procession. In the light of mature experience they saw and read and criticised the days of their childhood and youth, and realised that no experience is ever really lost or forgotten. No longer hampered and restricted by the weaknesses and imperfections of the physical brain, they had got into touch with their true memory, and could gather together all the broken threads of the past. So Peer, struggling in the dim dreary wastes of the lower astral plane, finds himself surrounded by the uncompleted elements of the life just over; the thoughts unfinished, the message received but never uttered, the songs unsung, the tears unshed, the deeds undone. Sorrowfully sighing, they move and breathe around him, and the sound of their reproachful lamentations only dies away as his mother's voice—his conscience—is heard once more, faintly upbraiding him with his failure to find the castle to which he had promised to drive her. He answers in a strain of desolate discouragement and bitterness, and flees faster and faster away. It is a curious scene, and probably the writer never dreamt, when he penned it, that enthusiasts would one day insist on staging it—tempted thereto

by the lyric sweetness of the verses. The writer has been unable to obtain any clear and definite description of how it is staged in Norway, even from those who declared it was wonderful, and effective and lovely. One imagines that children's voices should say the lines given to the withered leaves and tangled threads and dewdrops, for they all represent something half-developed and incomplete; but the most effective and most significant point—Peer's rapid flight through these experiences—must be impossible, and most foreign companies will do well to leave the scene alone, especially as no translation is likely to do justice to the lines. But the following scene plays well and effectively, and is so simple in its staging that no manager need hesitate to attack it. Peer awakes on the astral once more—not in delirium this time, half on and half off; but wholly and completely free from the trammels of the physical. Lassitude and pain are all over, and he is discovered singing an old ballad to himself, quite cheerful, but strongly impressed by the idea that somebody is dead and that he has a funeral to attend. His mistake is explained to him by a personage who is quaintly described as a Button-moulder, and who represents one of the angels or devas concerned in the working out of the law of reincarnation. At first Peer, still preoccupied by the idea of the funeral, is inclined to brush him aside, but the other arrests his attention and explains what has happened.

*Moulder.* Your coffin's bespoke, my good friend, and your grave's
ready dug;
Your body has served out its time, and must fall to decay,
And I've orders—strict orders—from Master to bring in your soul.
*Peer.* It can't be!—not like this—without warning!
*Moulder.* Tradition—and use.
The time for the christening feast, and for burial too,
Is in silence and secrecy set. There's no warning at all
For the guest of the hour.

And then follows the exposition of the law of reincarnation as it affects Peer. He is described as a button—designed to adorn the great garment of the Master; but his loop has given way. He is a failure—through his own fault—but is still worth so much as raw material; for—

The Master wastes nothing; there's nothing that's worthless to him,
That is why his great business prospers.

And failures—broken buttons, or those that have become defaced—are put back in the ladle and recast.

Peer's first protest is that such teaching is new-fangled and unorthodox.

> . . . Have me judged by the law, in the old-fashioned way!
> For a time, if you choose, send me down to my lord of the Hoof
> —Say a century now, at the most, if the judge is severe!—
> They tell me the torment is moral; I'll bear that and grin.
> But this other idea—to have to be melted and merged!
> To be Peer Gynt no more! Lose *myself*! It's a horrible thought.

And here it should be noted that the form of reincarnation Ibsen suggests is not in accordance with Theosophical teaching.

To the protest of the personality we are well accustomed. "To be Peer Gynt no more!" is an eminently human cry; but the Button-moulder's work implies complete loss of individuality and of character, as well as of personal memory. Peer is to be "merged in the mass"; to be melted down "with Tom, Dick and Hal and the rest of the crew"—a version of the theory which ignores the possibility of the evolution of the individual soul through repeated incarnation.

The Button-moulder suggests that Peer cannot possibly lose himself; for he has never truly found that same self; but Peer claims to have developed sufficient individuality to make this merging process impossible. In Theosophical parlance he is beyond the "group-soul" stage; but he is asked to prove it, and proceeds to search for a witness—someone who has known him on earth and can vouch that he has succeeded in being himself to such a degree that he can no longer be confounded with anyone else. And the first possible witness he meets is the old man of the Dovrë, the Troll king, whose appearance carries the discussion back to the big decision of Peer's life—the claiming or forsaking of Ingrid. He had declined then to circumscribe his actions, to settle down and conform to the expectations and ways of others. Was not this individuality? And the answer is emphatically "*No.*" Claiming freedom of action in the body he has fettered his soul; grasping at the outside shell of liberty, of progress and of growth, he has missed its kernel. Selfishness was the true basis of his decision, and it has dwarfed and confined him all his days. "Man is only himself by slaying himself"; and the Troll king cannot help him at the present juncture; he himself has suffered from the effects of Peer's decision. The rising generation, materialistic

and self-indulgent, even throws doubts on the poor old king's existence, *i.e.* on any element of law and order in the astral realm. His daughter has gone quite down hill, has actually consoled herself for Peer's defection by accepting a most disreputable Troll in his stead—in short, she has "led a deplorable life"; a confirmation of the previous hint of Ingrid's unhappiness with the drunken Aslak. Peer brings the garrulous old man back to the point with insistent egotism, but is finally convinced that no help is to be got in that quarter, and determines to seek it elsewhere. If he has not achieved individuality through the practice of virtue—what about the practice of vice? Surely he has been definitely *bad* enough to escape the ladle? and his next appeal is to the Lean Person, the Superintendent of Karma on the disciplinary side. He is a cheerful fiend, devoid of malice or hatred either towards God or man, and inclined to enjoy his work, which he sums up graphically in a vivid metaphor borrowed from photography:

Look
At these portraits they turn out in Paris just made by the light of the sun.
There's a positive stage in the process, and also a negative one.
The likeness is latent, potential, the moment the ray strikes the glass,
The treatment that follows evolves it, and perfects it till it can pass
As a fairly wrought picture, reflecting the image impressed at the first.
To continue;—the soul that has wandered down-hill and has got to the worst,
Has worked on the negative only; and that is a thing none can see
And admire; but it need not be useless, if properly doctored by me.
I wash it, I steam it, I scour it; I treat it with sulphur, and lo!—
There's the image appears as it should be! But if the whole plate is no go,
A mere smudge—neither sulphur availeth nor anything else.

And Peer, in spite of his pitiful confessions of blunder, cowardice and wrong, is told that his life is only of the smudgy order. In a wonderful monologue he admits it and says farewell to the experiences that have been showered upon him "in vain." True repentance is reached at last, and out of the depths of the valley of humiliation and despair he utters his cry of sorrow and anguish.

And the answer is the vision of Solveig once more. Erect, yet gentle, she stands before him, stretching out welcoming hands; tender, faithful, long-suffering and full of compassion; and with the cry of a tired child he goes home to her heart, to peace at last. She croons, first softly, and then with growing strength and

clearness, the lullaby song of rest after wanderings. The prodigal has come home; home to the hut he has built and the bride who has waited for him there. Surely Ruskin would have delighted in the persistence of that hut—the one piece of solid, honest, hard work accomplished by our hero—even in the heaven-world itself! And yet—it is only a hut so far, and in time to come "a palace must rise, founded firm on the rock." Already in his dreams Peer has seen it—that wonderful palace!—and like a reminder of work yet to do, the voice of the Moulder breaks in on the singing:

To the next cross-roads, Peer—and then we shall see.

Then Solveig's song is resumed, her voice coming ever stronger, fuller and clearer, in the glory of the new dawn that rises—in the tender morning light of hope and gladness—and the wonderful drama comes to an end.

ISABELLE M. PAGAN.

# *DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

## A.—Characters on the Physical Plane.

Peer Gynt[1] (*a Norse peasant proprietor*).
Åse[2] (*his widowed mother*).
Kari (*a cottar's wife*).
1st Old Crone.
2nd Old Crone.
The Farmer of Hegstad.
Ingrid (*his daughter and heiress*).
Mads[3] Moen (*Ingrid's bridegroom*).
Mads' Father.
Mads' Mother.
The Feast-Master (*at the wedding*).
Aslak (*a smith*)
1st Man
1st Woman
1st Lad
2nd Lad
3rd Lad
1st Girl
2nd Girl
} (*guests at Ingrid's wedding*).
Bailiff.
The Farmer from Hedal (*a new-comer to the district*).
His Wife.
Little Helga
Solveig
} (*their daughters*).

*Peasants and Guests.*

## B.—Characters on the Psychic or Astral Plane.

The Troll-King (*or Old Man of the Dovrë*).
The Green-Clad One (*his daughter and heiress*).
1st Courtier.
2nd Courtier.
A Troll-Pig.
1st Witch.
2nd Witch.
1st Imp.
2nd Imp.
3rd Imp.
The Great Boyg (*a voice in the darkness*).
An Ugly Elf (*representing a broken promise*).

*Bird-Cries, Troll-Maidens, Witches, Brownies, Dewdrops, Withered Leaves, etc.*

## C.—Characters introduced in the Epilogue.

A Moulder of Buttons.
A Lean Person.

*Chorus of Church-Goers on Whitsunday.*

[1] Pronounce Pair Günt ; the G hard, the y like the German ü.
[2] Pronounce Oasë ; the å is always like the o in home.
[3] Pronounce Mahs ; the a broad ; the s is always sharp in Norse, even when final.

## *SUMMARY OF SCENES*

### ACT I.—Actual Events.

Scene 1.—*Near Åse's Farm.* The Resolution.

Scene 2.—*On the Way to Hegstad.* Hesitation.

Scene 3.—*At Hegstad.* The Rape of Ingrid.

Scene 4.—*On the Mountain Side.* Repudiation of Ingrid.

Scene 5.—*The Same.* The Search for the Sinner.

### ACT II.—Astral Illusions. An Echo.

Scene 1. { *In the Realm of the Troll-King.*
{ *Fever and Delirium.* The Wooing and Repudiation of the Green-Clad One.

Scene 2. { *In the Darkness.*
{ *Weakness and Depression.* The Encounter with the Great Boyg.

Scene 3. { *Near Åse's Farm.*
{ *The Awakening on the Physical Plane.* Helga's Message.

### ACT III.—The Path of Action.

Scene 1.—*The Outlaw in the Forest.* Peer builds his Hut. Solveig's Arrival. Peer haunted by the Past. Solveig's Promise.

Scene 2.—*Åse's Farm.* Sold up.

Scene 3.—*The Outlaw's Visit.* Åse's Death.

### ACT IV.—Peer on his Travels.

*N.B.—This Act is omitted in this Version, excepting*

Scene 10.—*The Faith of Solveig.* "He will come again."

### ACT V.—The Outlaw's Return.

Scene 1.—*The Auction.* "One meets with Acquaintances."

Scene 2.—*The Summing-Up.* "The Chance that was Lost."

### EPILOGUE.—After Death.

Scene 1.—*Transition.* Through the Gates of Death.

Scene 2.—*On the Astral Plane.* Self-confidence shaken.

Scene 3.—*Instruction.* Humility at Last. Re-union.

# PEER GYNT

## ACT I.

### Scene I.

This scene in the original is written in the familiar Hiawatha measure, and that rhythm was retained at the Edinburgh performance of the play; but although its quiet cadences are ideal for such descriptive writing as *The Death of Minnehaha*, they proved unsuitable for stage use, and impossible to deliver without monotony. Åse's quick changes of mood demand something more plastic in English; and though certain peculiarities of the Norwegian language—and notably the fact that the article in Norse is often merely a suffix—make such lines flow more easily in that tongue, Ibsen evidently felt the limitations of the measure, for this is the only scene in the play in which he uses it throughout.

* *A wooded hillside, near Åse's farm. A river rushes down the slope. On the farther side of it (R.C.) an old mill-shed. It is a hot day in summer.*

Peer Gynt, *a strongly-built youth of twenty, comes down the slope. His mother,* Åse, *a small, slightly-built woman, follows him, scolding angrily.*

*Åse.* (*L.*). Peer! you're lying!
*Peer* (* *without stopping*). I'm not.
*Åse.* Well, then, swear that it's true.
*Peer.* Swear? The very idea!
*Åse.* You dare not! For shame!
From beginning to end, Peer, the whole thing's a lie.
*Peer* (* *stopping R.*).
It is true—every word.
*Åse* (* *confronting him*). That's right! Brazen it out!

* Stage directions marked thus are found in the original. The others are merely supplementary suggestions. Square brackets indicate possible cuts.

First you leave your own farm, when the harvest is ripe,
Just to roam o'er the mountains, to hunt through the snows
After reindeer, forsooth!—Where's your gun? Where's the game?
You would dare to come home with this cock-and-bull tale!
Always lies! Do you think I'll believe you? No fear!
—And where was it you saw him, this buck?
*Peer.* Farther west,
Towards Gendin.
*Åse* (* *laughing scornfully*). Indeed!
*Peer.* And the wind, blowing keen,
Swept right at me, as hid in the alders I stood.
He was scraping for lichen.
*Åse* (* *as before*). No doubt! (*Turns away from him.*)
*Peer.* Breathless, dumb,
As I listened, I heard the snow crunch 'neath his hoof,
Saw the branch of one antler. Then, soft, 'mong the stones,
I crept forward, till, crouched very close, I could see.
Such a buck as he was! Oh! so sleek and so fat!
You have ne'er seen the like.
*Åse* (*going L.*). No! of course not!
*Peer* (*C.*). I fired!
And he dropped where he stood on the hillside. At once
As he fell, I sat firmly astride on his back,
Gripped him tight by the ear—would have driven my knife
To the hilt in his neck, when the brute screamed with rage,
Quickly sprang to his feet, threw his head back, and, lo!
I was caught in a vice, pinned and jammed by his horns!
My good blade was sent spinning right out of my hand!—
And like lightning, he fled Gendin way, by the ridge.
*Åse* (* *involuntarily*). Lord! save us!
(*Turns and becomes gradually entranced.*)
*Peer.* That ridge of the Gendin up there!
You have seen it, perhaps? for it stretches four miles,
And as sharp as a razor the whole of the way.
Far and wide you can look over landslips and screes
Down by glaciers, down over loose grey moraines
To the right and the left, on both sides, to the tarns
That sleep sluggish and black in the valleys below.
And the depth!—Seven hundred good fathoms at least!

So the two of us fled through the air, right along
By this ridge. What a ride—what a colt! As we rushed,
Straight before us peaks sparkled and glittered like suns.
And the speed! Why, the eagles that sailed, golden brown,
In the great dizzy void betwixt us and the tarns
Dropped like motes in the air! And though down on the rocks
There was crashing and hurtling of ice-floes ashore,
Not a sound reached my ears! Only sprites[1] that will dance
All around and about on the heights, till the brain
Reels and totters—the spirits of dizziness came
And went swinging and singing, and circlewise passed
Before hearing and sight.

*Åse* (* *giddy*). Heaven comfort me!

*Peer.* There,
At the very worst point—the most frightful of all—
On a sudden, a startled cock-ptarmigan rose
Right up under our feet, with a cackle and flap,
From the cleft where he lay; and the buck shied half round,
Gave a leap heaven-high, and then down with a plunge
Went the two of us, over, and into the depths!

(* Åse *totters and catches hold of the trunk of a tree.* Peer Gynt *continues.*)

Up behind us, the wall of the mountain rose black;
And before us was nothing but limitless space
As it seemed; for at first we met great banks of cloud,
Then we clove flocks of sea-gulls, that screamed in mid-air—
Flew in every direction in terror!—and still
We rushed downwards and downwards. Beneath us, at last,
Something shimmered and shone. We were nearing the tarn,
And the reindeer was seen in its waters below,
Clearly mirrored, as if rushing up from the deeps
With the same frantic speed, as we shot from above.

*Åse* (* *gasping for breath*).
God help me! (*Sits.*) Oh, quickly, Peer! Tell me the rest!

*Peer.* As the buck from above and the buck from below
Clashed together and met, and sent foam-flakes a-flying,
I clung to him close, and half floating, half swimming,

[1] *Cf.* the spirits of dizziness that hover round Rudi in Hans Andersen's story of *The Ice Maiden.*

We got to the shore—for I never let go—
And once there, I ran home.
*Åse.* And the buck?
*Peer.* He's there still.
(* *Snaps his fingers, turns on his heel, and adds—aside*?)
If you can, you may catch him.
*Åse* (*rising*). [To think that you're home
Safe and sound after that! Not a hair of your head,
Not a bone in your body, that's hurt. The dear Lord!
Oh! what thanks and what praises we owe Him, that watched
O'er my boy!—Yet, for all that], Your breeches are torn!
But what's that, when one thinks of the terrible leap,
And the danger that——
(* *Stops suddenly, looks at him with open mouth and wide eyes, unable to speak for a while, and then bursts out:*)
Peer! you are lying again!
Holy cross! Is this all you are fit for? To spin
Crazy tales that would take in the devil himself?
This story you tell me, I knew as a girl!
Ay!—before I was twenty! You'd foist upon me
That old yarn? Gudbrand Glesnë—'Twas he took the leap.
*Peer.* So did I. Such a thing might chance twice.
*Åse.* Never! No!
[Though a lie may be turned upside down, and tricked out
And made smart with fine feathers—all borrowed of course!—
And bedizened and dressed until no one can see
Its old carcase, so lean and so withered beneath.
That is what you've been doing! You laid it all forth
In fine style with your grand golden eagles and stuff!]
And to think I believed you—forgot the old tale
While you lied—and stood gaping and speechless with fright!
*Peer* (*crossing angrily, L.*).
If another had railed at me that way, I swear,
I'd have knocked him half senseless.
*Åse* (*weeping, R.C.*). Oh! would I were dead!
Would I slept in the grave! Neither prayers nor tears
Ever touch him. Oh, Peer! are you lost evermore?
*Peer.* Little mother! my dear little motherkins! There!
All you say is quite right, of course—yes—every word!
Now be happy, and gentle and good (*petting her*).

*Åse* (*repulsing him*). Hold your tongue!
*Me* be happy! How can I with you for a son?
Lazy swine that you are! Think, how bitter to me,
A poor widow—alone!—and the shame of it all!
(* *Weeping again.*) (Peer *turns away impatiently.*)
What is left to us now, from your grandfather's days,
Of the bushels of gold Rasmus Gynt had put by?
All sent flying!—all squandered and scattered like sand
By your father. *He'd* buy up the land, far and near!
*He* must drive in his coach—and a gilded one too!
Where's the money he wasted, that day of the feast
Held in mid-winter here, when he made every guest
Fling his glass and his flagon behind him, to smash
On the walls or the floor?
*Peer* (*L.*). Where's the snow of last year?
*Åse*. Hold your tongue and keep silence, I tell you! Look now
At the farm-house! The window panes there, stopped with rags.
Hedges, fences all down!—and the poor beasts exposed
To the wind and the weather! The fields lying bare!
Every month a distraint!——
*Peer* (*crossing R.*). Well, enough of all that!
Often luck that is drooping will spring up again,
And as high as before.
*Åse* (*L.C.*). H'm! The soil where it grew
Has been covered with salt. That a great strapping lad,
Such as you!—Oh! To think you're as jaunty to-day
As you were long ago, when the pastor, new come
From the town—Copenhagen—dropped in—asked your name,
And then vowed—the good man!—such a head-piece as yours
Would be envied by princes in Denmark!—and so
Got a horse and a sledge from your father, as thanks
For his nice friendly chat! These were glorious days!
When the provost, the captain, and all the fine folk
Dropped in daily and feasted and drank till you'd think
They would burst; but 'tis poverty shows us our friends.
There were lonely times later, when John o' the gold
Had to start out a pedlar, and carry his pack.
(* *Dries her eyes on her apron.*) (*Approaches him.*)
But you're big and you're strong! You could work well enough.
Be a staff and a pillar to me in the end.

You could keep the old farm—guard what's left of the gear.
(* *Crying again.*)
Lord have mercy upon me!—for little's the help
I can look for elsewhere! least of all, lad, from you!]
Ay! You'll lounge by the hearth, idly raking the fire,
Or else, scouring the country, you'll frighten the girls
From the feasts and the junketings, shaming me here,
There and everywhere!—quarrelling, fighting with louts
Like yourself—all the worst of them—
*Peer* (**turning away from her*). Let me alone! (*Crosses.*)
*Åse* (**following him*).
Do you dare to deny you were first in the fight—
That fine set-to at Lundë of late—when, half-mad,
Like a pack of low mongrels all snarling with rage,
You fought on till you broke Aslak's arm—the big smith's—
Wrenched his finger, at least, till it hung out of joint.
*Peer.* Who on earth told you that?
*Åse.* Kari heard the wild yells;—
Cottar Kari.
*Peer.* Maybe; but 'twas I that she heard.
*Åse.* You?
*Peer.* Yes, mother!—'Twas I that got beaten—and howled.
*Åse.* What?—You don't mean to say—
*Peer* (**rubbing his elbow*). He's a lusty one, too.
*Åse.* Who?
*Peer.* The smith, to be sure!
*Åse.* Oh! for shame!—and for shame!
Such a sot—such a low worthless fellow as that!
To be beaten by *him*! I could spit on you, Peer!
(* *Weeping again.*)
Oh, to think of it! Many a sorrow I've borne!
I've been slighted—disgraced. It was nothing to this.
*Peer.* Well, I never!—so whether I beat them or not!—
If I'm hammered instead, you lament just the same?
Cheer up, mother! (*laughing*).
*Åse* (*eagerly*). You're lying?—just lying again?
*Peer.* To be sure!—just for once. Come now, dry your old eyes! (* *Clenching his left hand.*)
[And just listen! With this pair of pincers, like this,
I fast gripped him, and held him bent double, until

With my sledge-hammer fist——
*Åse.* Oh! you brawler! You'll bring
My grey hairs to the grave——
*Peer* (*petting her*). Not a bit of it. No!
You deserve something better and grander than that,
Twenty thousand times o'er, little mother of mine!
You may trust me. The parish shall honour you yet!
You'll be high o'er them all, when I've done something great.
Only wait!
*Åse* (* *contemptuously*). Always wait!
*Peer.* Yes! who knows what may chance?
*Åse.* If you'd find enough sense just to do your own darns
In your breeches yourself!—I'd be thankful for that.
*Peer.* I'll be emperor!—king!
*Åse.* He's gone out of his wits!
Heaven help me!
*Peer.* I will! Give me time!
*Åse.* "Give you time!
And you'll e'en be a Prince." That's the proverb, I think.
*Peer.* You shall see!
*Åse* (*crossing*). Hold your tongue. You're clean crazy at last!
Yet it's true in a way. If you hadn't been stuffed
Full of nonsense and trash, you'd have done something too.
That young daughter of Hegstad's was fond of you once.
Had you wooed with a will, you'd the game in your hands.
*Peer.* Had I truly?
*Åse.* Of course! She'd have had her own way.
For the old man is weak, though he's obstinate. Ay,
It is Ingrid who rules in that house. Step by step,
Though he grumbles, he follows her.
(* *Beginning to cry again.*)
Think of it, Peer! (*Sits.*)
She's a girl made of gold!—Land entailed on her too!
Had you set your mind on it, you'd flaunt it to-day
As her bridegroom! Yet there you stand! tattered and torn.
*Peer* (* *briskly*). Then, let's both go a-wooing.
*Åse.* But where?
*Peer.* At the farm—
Up at Hegstad.
*Åse.* Poor laddie, they've locked the door fast.

*Peer.* How is that?
*Åse.* Woe the day, lad! You've lost the good luck;
Lost the moment.
*Peer.* Speak out!
*Åse* (* *sobbing*). You were riding the deer
Through the air, in the west; and the maiden is won.
She has taken Mads Moen.
*Peer.* What? Never! That ass?
Why!—the women can't bear him! That scarecrow?
*Åse.* Yes, he!
He's the man of her choice.
*Peer.* Wait you here for a bit!
I'll just harness the horse, and—— (* *Going.*)
*Åse* (*rising*). Too late. Spare your pains.
For the wedding's to-morrow.
*Peer.* I'm dashed if I care.
I'll be with her to-night.
*Åse.* Fie, for shame on you, Peer!
They'll just laugh at us both—make my misery worse.
*Peer.* Never fear, I'll succeed. Whoop! hurrah! Up you go!
(* *Laughing and shouting at the same time.*)
Never mind the old wagon!—'Twould take too much time.
(* *Lifts her in his arms.*)
*Åse.* Let me go!
*Peer.* No I won't! You shall go in my arms
To the wedding! Come on!
[1] (* *Wades out into the stream with her.*)
*Åse.* Help! Have mercy, good Lord!
We are drowning!
*Peer.* No fear! I was ne'er born for that.
But for something far finer.
*Åse.* I dare swear it too!
You'll be hanged in the end!—Oh, you brute!
(* *Tugging at his hair.*)
*Peer.* You keep still,
For the footing is slippery-slimy down here.
*Åse.* You great donkey!

[1] This river business must, of course, be cut on a small amateur stage, and in the absence of effective scenery; but it is so characteristic of Peer that it should be retained if possible.

*Peer.* That's right!—never bridle your tongue.
It hurts nobody. Here it slopes upwards again.
*Åse.* Have a care!
*Peer.* Here we go! Let's play Peer and the buck!
(* *Capering.*)
I'm the buck, and you're Peer.
*Åse.* I'll go crazy at last!
*Peer.* See!—we're close to the shore. (* *Wades ashore.*)
Give the reindeer a kiss!
Just as thanks for the ride.
*Åse* (*boxing his ears*). There's the thanks he deserves!
*Peer.* Ow! of all shabby fares!
*Åse.* Put me down! (*Wriggles free.*)
*Peer* (*pursuing her and trying to lift her again*). No, I won't.
You must go to the wedding—be spokesman for me.
You're so clever!—You'll talk to him, coax the old boy;—
Say Mads Moen's a silly young fool.
*Åse.* Set me down!
*Peer.* After that you may say what a rare lad I am.
*Åse.* Ay! depend upon that! I'll speak out, straight and plain.
Paint you truly! A target you'll be, for their scorn
Ere I'm done with you. Yes! Every prank that you've played——
*Peer.* Oh! just will you?
*Åse* (* *kicking with rage*). I will! and I'll not hold my tongue
Till the old man himself sets his dog after you
As a vagrant—a tramp!
*Peer.* Then I'll e'en go alone.
*Åse.* But I'll follow you.
*Peer.* Stuff! You're not strong enough, dear!
*Åse.* Am I not? I could crush the hard stones in my rage—
Feed on flints! Let me go!
*Peer.* If you'll promise me first——
*Åse.* No, I won't! I'll go with you, and talk to them all.
They shall know what you are.
*Peer.* Then you'll have to stay here.
*Åse.* I will *not.* I will go to the feast.
*Peer.* Can't be done.
*Åse.* Why not? What will you do?
*Peer.* Perch you jauntily there
On the roof of the mill.

(* *He puts her on it.* Åse *screams.*)

*Åse.* Lift me down! Lift me down!

*Peer.* If you'll listen to me.

*Åse.* Stuff and rubbish!

*Peer.* My sweet
Little mother, I pray——

*Åse* (* *throwing a sod of grass at him*). Peer! At *once*, lift me down!

*Peer.* Ay!—if only I dared;—very willingly too.
(* *Coming nearer.*)
Now remember, dear, sit very quiet Don't kick;
And don't strain yourself stretching; nor loosen the stones
By rash pullings or shakings, for really you know
You might fall, and fare badly.

*Åse.* You beast!

*Peer.* Now keep still!

*Åse.* Ugh! you changeling! May Troll witches take you!

*Peer.* Oh fie!
Really, mother!

*Åse.* For shame!

*Peer* (*kneeling*). Give your blessing, I beg,
On my perilous journey. You will, won't you?

*Åse.* No!
But I'll thrash you, and soundly, in spite of your size.

*Peer.* Fare-ye-well, my dear mother! Have patience, and wait.
I shan't stay long away.
(*Goes, but turns back, holding up a warning finger, and says:*)
But, remember! Keep still!
(*Goes off R.*)

*Åse.* Heaven help me! Hi, Peer! He is going away!
Oh! you rider of bucks! You young brazen-faced liar!
D'ye hear me? He's striding along o'er the fields. (*Screams.*)
Oh-ee! help me! I'm dizzy!

(*Two* Old Crones, *with sacks on their backs, come down the path to the mill.*)

1*st Crone* (*L.*). Ha' mercy! What's that?
Who was screaming?

*Åse.* 'Twas I!

2*nd Crone.* Åse! up on the heights!
Only look!

*Åse.* You may say it! And soon, higher yet

I shall find myself. Heaven—God help me!—is near!
*1st Crone.* Bless your passing! (*Sets down sack, C.*)
*Åse.* A ladder—go fetch it! That fiend—
That young scamp of a Peer——
*2nd Crone.* What? Your son?
*Åse.* Peer himself!
You have seen how he treats me now, both of you!
*1st Crone.* Ay!
We can witness.
*Åse.* But help me! To Hegstad I'll go.
I must follow.
*2nd Crone.* He's there?
*1st Crone.* Then you'll soon be avenged.
Aslak Smith is there too.
*Åse* (* *wringing her hands*). Oh, then! God help my boy!
They will kill him at last!
*1st Crone.* Very likely, they say.
Ay, we've talked of that often; but comfort ye yet.
For what must be must be. (*Lifts sack again.*)
*2nd Crone* (*going L.*). Hush! she's out of her wits.
(* *Calls up the hill.*)
Hi! Hullo! Eivind! Anders! Come here!
*A man's voice.* What's amiss?
*2nd Crone.* Here's Peer Gynt's perched his mother right up on the roof!

CURTAIN.

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## SCENE II.

**A hillock covered with bushes and heather. The highroad runs behind it; a fence between.*

PEER GYNT *comes along a footpath (L.), stops, and looks out over the distant prospect.*

*Peer.* Yonder lies Hegstad, and soon I shall reach it.
(* *Puts one leg over fence and then hesitates.*)
Is Ingrid alone in the house now, I wonder?
No; to the farm guests are swarming like midges.

H'm. To turn back now perhaps would be wiser.
(* *Draws back his leg.*)
There will be whispers and titters to face there,
Stinging and biting and burning right through me.
(* *Moves away from the fence, and begins absently to pluck leaves.*)
Ah! if I'd only a stunning good dram now!
A right proper dram. For the laughter don't bite then.
Or if I could enter unknown—unsuspected!
(* *Looks round suddenly, as though afraid, and hides among the bushes. Enter* 1ST MAN *and* 3RD WOMAN, 1ST LAD, 1ST GIRL, *and* 2ND GIRL (*R.*), *carrying wedding gifts of food.*)
1*st Man.* His father was drunken, his mother is weakly.
3*rd Woman.* Ay, then it's no wonder the lad's good for nothing.
(*They pass on, and exeunt L.* PEER *comes forward and peers after them, ashamed.*)
*Peer.* Were they talking of me? (* *With a forced shrug.*)
Very good. Let them chatter.
After all, they may talk; they can't kill me with sneering.
(* *Lying down on the heathery slope, gazes at sky.*)
What a strange sort of cloud—like a horse and its rider.
And after it flies an old crone on a broomstick. (* *Laughs quietly.*)
It's mother! She's scolding and screaming, "You beast, Peer!
Here! Hey then, Peer Gynt!" (* *His eyes gradually close.*)
Ay, now she is frightened.
Peer Gynt he rides first, and there follow him many.
His steed is gold shod, and all crested with silver,
[Himself he has gauntlets and sabre and scabbard,
His long flowing cloak has a lining of satin,
And brave is the company riding behind him.
Not a man of them all has his seat in the saddle!]
Nobody glitters like him in the sunshine!
[Down by the fence stand the people in clusters,
Gazing in wonder, and doffing their hats too!
Women are curtseying—all the world knows him,
Emperor Peer and his thousands of henchmen.
Rich as a lord grows each man in the parish,
Gathering silver he scatters in passing,
Sixpenny pieces and glittering shillings
Rolling about in the dust of the roadway!]
High o'er the ocean Peer Gynt goes a-riding

To England, and there all the fair English maidens
Wait on the shore with their Prince. And the Nobles
And Emperor too! How they rise from the banquet,
To greet him who rides! The great ruler of England,
Lifting the crown from his head, says:—
(2ND *and* 3RD LADS *enter R., and cross briskly behind the fence, carrying their jackets over their shoulders.* ASLAK *follows them, and, catching sight of* PEER, *stops and looks down at him, amused.*)

*Aslak.* Hi, stop there!
(*The* LADS *turn, and stand beside him, looking at* PEER.)
Just look at Peer Gynt, the young swine! I will wager
He's drunk as a lord.

*Peer* (*waking and * starting half up*). What's the emperor saying?

*Aslak* (*leaning over the fence and grinning*).
Come! Up with you, Peer!

*Peer.* What the devil!——The Smith here?
Why, what do you want?

*Aslak* (*to the others*). There! I told you! He's got 'em!
Still fuddled a bit after swilling at Lundë.

*Peer* (*jumping up*). You'd better be going!

*Aslak.* Oh yes! I am going.
But tell us, my lad! Where on earth have you dropped from?
Six weeks you've been gone. Did the Trolls on the mountain
Get hold of you?

*Peer.* No. But adventures I've had,
Aslak Smith!

*Aslak* (** winking at the others*). Let us hear!

*Peer.* They're no business of yours.

*Aslak.* H'm. Ahem. (*Pause.*)
I *suppose* you are going to Hegstad?

*Peer.* No. Certainly not.

*Aslak.* Oh, indeed! They say Ingrid
Was fond of you once.

*Peer.* Grimy crow! (** Threatening him.*)

*Aslak* (** falling back*). Keep your temper.
Though Ingrid's a jilt, there are others remaining.
Think!—You son of Jon Gynt! Come along to the feasting.
You'll find there both lambkins and well-seasoned widows.

*Peer.* To hell with you!
*Aslak.* Surely among them there's someone
Will take you. Good-night. I shall greet the bride for you.
(* *They go off, L., laughing and whispering.*)
*Peer* (* *looks after them, and then makes a defiant motion with his hands*).
The bride? Well, for my part, the heiress of Hegstad
May wed where she likes. It is all one to me.
(* *Looks down at his clothes.*)
Ugh! My breeches are torn; I'm all ragged and grimed.
If I only had something brand-new to put on!
(* *Stamps on ground.*)
Or if I could cut out the scorn of these men
With a knife! (*Music of a country dance heard softly in the distance.*) What was that? Some one tittered behind me!
I certainly thought—No!—no, no! It was no one.
I'll go home to my mother.
(* *Begins to go upwards, but stops again and listens, turning to Hegstad.*)
They're playing a dance, though!
(* *Gazes and listens, coming down step by step. Rubs his hands down his thighs.*)
[The lasses *do* swarm. Six or eight to a man!
Oh! Death of my life! I must join in the frolic!
But how about mother, perched up on the mill-house?
(* *Pauses, then looks to Hegstad again.*)
Hey! Heugh! How the dancers fly over the green!]
And Guttorm can make his old fiddle speak out.
Why, it booms like a waterfall over a scaur.
And then—all that glittering bevy of girls!
Yes, Galloping Death! I must join in the fun!

CURTAIN.

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## SCENE III.

* *The farmyard at Hegstad. In the background, L., a dwelling-house* [[1] *with steps leading up to the door*], *a throng of guests, a lively dance in progress on the green. The* FIDDLER *sits on*

[1] So shown in photograph of original scene.

*a table. The* Feast-master *is standing in the doorway.* Kitchen-Maids *are going to and fro between the different buildings. Groups of elderly people sit here and there talking.*

Note.—*Actual staging will naturally modify the above, reducing the throng of dancers and limiting the guests. A small stage (say 22 feet by 15 feet) only allows of one seated group, which should be placed L., near a table, with drinking-cups and refreshments on it. The* Bridegroom's Father *is standing near the table, watching his son. Some of the women are sewing or knitting; a few of the men playing cards. The fiddler's table is back, C. Time should be allowed for the audience to take in the scene before the dialogue begins, and* Ingrid *should be prominent, so that she may be recognised later on. The attention of the spectators is best concentrated on her by making the curtain rise on her quarrel with* Mads. *Her father stands remonstrating with her; while, in the background,* Aslak *and the* Feast-master *urge* Mads Moen *to go forward and speak to her. He hangs back sheepishly, but is shoved forward suddenly, just as her father turns away with a shrug of despair and speaks to* Mads' Father *and* 1st Man, *who are drinking, L.* Ingrid, *turning sharply round, boxes her bridegroom's ears, goes back R., weeping, and exit. The guests laugh heartily, both before and after the curtain rises, and again as* Mads *follows his bride sheepishly off the stage. For convenience of management, the speakers have been numbered in this edition. As a general rule, odd numbers keep to the right of the stage, even numbers to the left. The* 1st Girl *stands extreme R., chatting merrily to* 3rd Girl *and* 1st Lad. *The* 2nd Girl *is seated L., beside the* Bridegroom's Mother. *The other* girls *and* lads *group themselves in numerical order. Those at the back C. are inclined to hover round* Aslak, *who is one of the centres of mirth and jollity. He and the* Feast-master, *who comes and goes among the guests, often exchange chaff aside, and both of them should watch over the grouping and see that the others do not straggle into straight lines. The music begins before the curtain rises, and some of the young folks are discovered selecting partners; but the dance is not actually started till the moment after* Ingrid's *exit. As it comes to an end, the* 1st Woman *leaves a group in the background and comes for-*

*ward, L., in response to a signal from the* BRIDEGROOM'S MOTHER, *who leans forward anxiously and asks a question aside. The music continues pianissimo, and the* 2ND LAD, *who has been whirling his partner—and other people's partners—energetically round, is presently left dancing alone in the centre of the stage.*

1*st Woman.* The bride, did you say? Yes. She's crying a bit! But that, as you know, doesn't matter a farthing.

(MADS *enters, R. up, and comes forward L.C.*)

*Feast-master.* Come along now, good folk, you must empty the barrel.

1*st Man.* Best thanks to you, friend; but you fill up too quickly.

(*Goes C. and talks to* ASLAK.)

1*st Lad* (* *dancing along, holding* 1ST GIRL *by the hand*). Oh! to it now, Guttorm, and don't stint the music.

1*st Girl.* Yes; Fiddle away till you rouse all the echoes!

(*They dance off L. together, up.*)

2*nd and 3rd Girls.* There's a rare fling! (*Watching* 2ND LAD.)

4*th Girl.* He has limbs that are supple!

2*nd Lad* (* *dancing*). Plenty room here, both above and around us.

(4TH GIRL *carries beer to* ASLAK *at back of stage.*)

*Mads Moen* (* *whimpering, and twitching his father's jacket*). Father! she will not; she's horrid.

*His Father.* *What* say you?

*Mads.* She has locked herself in! (* *Whimpering.*)

*His Father* (* *irritated*). Well, then, find the key, can't you?

*Mads.* I can't—I *can't* find it.

*Father.* Oh, Nincompoop! Ninny!

(* *Turns away.* MADS *drifts across the yard.*)

(1ST GIRL *runs in again, L. up, followed by* 1ST LAD.)

1*st Lad* (*to Girls R.*). You just wait a bit, girls! Things will soon be more lively. Here he comes! Peer himself!

(*Exit* MADS *up R.*)

*Aslak.* What! is Peer Gynt invited?

*Feast-master.* Peer Gynt? [No, indeed!] (Hegstad goes into House

(*Whispers aside to* ASLAK, * *and goes towards the house.*)

*Aslak* (*laughing*). Ha, ha, ha! (*To Girls.*) Hist!—Just listen! An if he should speak to you, never take notice.

*1st Girl* (*clapping her hands*).
What fun! We'll pretend that we don't even see him.
(* *Enter* PEER, *L., bright and full of animation: stops in front of group, and claps his hands.*)
*Peer.* Here! which is the liveliest girl of the lot of you?
*1st Girl.* I'm not.
*3rd Girl.* Nor am I.
*5th Girl.* No: and I am not either.
*Peer* (*to* 4TH GIRL, *seizing her hand*).
Well! you come along, then—for want of a better!
*4th Girl* (*scornfully*). Many thanks! (*Pulls her hand away, and talks indignantly to the farmer.*)
(PEER *approaches* 2ND GIRL.)
*2nd Girl.* I'm for home.
(*Turns away, and speaks to an elderly man.*)
*Peer.* What! to-night? Are you crazy?
*Aslak* (*aside to* PEER, *jeeringly*).
See *that*, Peer! She'd rather have *him* for a partner!
*Peer.* Get out! (*Turns sharply away and addresses* 1ST MAN.) Are the girls all bespoke?
*1st Man.* Very likely.
Find out for yourself! (*Turns away.*)
*Aslak, 3rd Lad, 5th, 7th, and 9th Girls.*
Ay! Find out for yourself!
(*They laugh.*)

(* PEER GYNT *has suddenly become subdued. He glances shyly and furtively at the group. All look at him, but no one speaks. He approaches other groups. Wherever he goes there is silence; when he moves away they look after him and smile.*)

NOTE.—*If the stage is small it must now be fairly well cleared for* SOLVEIG'S *arrival; and while the above business is going on, the bulk of the young people, laughing and whispering together and jeering at* PEER, *withdraw to the dancing-green or elsewhere. The* 1ST LAD *and* 1ST GIRL *cross L. together. He runs laughing into the house. She goes forward L., and whispers to the* BRIDEGROOM'S MOTHER *and to the* 1ST WOMAN, *who joins them.* ASLAK *and the* 3RD LAD, *who have been particularly derisive, go off together, R., with the* 5TH, 7TH, *and* 9TH GIRLS. *The* BRIDEGROOM'S MOTHER, *after a word with her husband,*



* insert lines; aslak to Peer on page 4

*who is still playing cards, L., goes into the house. The* Feast-master *remains R.C., talking to* 1st Man *and* 2nd Lad.

*Peer.* How their thoughts, sharp as needles, dart through me!
Their jeers
Harshly grate like a saw when it's under a file.
*(Drooping and miserable, with his back to the audience,* he slinks along close to the fence.* Solveig, *leading* Helga *by the hand, comes into the yard, followed by her parents.)*

Note.—Solveig *and her people are strangers in the district, and should therefore wear costumes of a different cut from those of the other guests. At performances where it is specially desired to emphasise the inner meaning of the play, the colours chosen should be symbolic;* e.g. *clear azure and tender rose colour for* Solveig *instead of navy blue and scarlet. The materials should be woollen; anything richer is out of place. If the stage is small her entrance must be taken slightly later than is indicated here; and it is more effective when softly accompanied by the melody of her "*Song of Faith,*" which should begin just as* Peer *bows his head in the depths of his humiliation, and continue till* Solveig *disappears into the house. He raises his head as she enters, and watches her cross the stage in silence.*

*1st Man (C.).* Look! Here are the new folk.
*2nd Lad.* The folk from out westward?
*1st Man.* The people from Hedal.
*2nd Lad.* Ah yes! That's the farmer.
(*They go R. Exit* 1st Woman.)
(* *Peer places himself in the path of the newcomers and points to* Solveig).
May I dance with your daughter?
*Solveig's Father.* Ay, certainly do so;
But first we must in here and greet the good people.
(*Greets farmer, who takes them into the house. Any superfluous guests follow, and the stage is left almost clear.*)
*Feast-master.*
Since you find yourself here, take a pull at the liquor.
*Peer (looking after newcomer).*
No thanks. I'm for dancing. I'm not at all thirsty.
(*Exit* Feast-master, 1st Man, *and* 2nd Lad, *R.*)
Not now. (*Aside.*) Ah! How fair! Is there anyone like her?

Looked down at her shoes and her snowy-white apron.
And held on so fast by the skirt of her mother.
She carried a psalm-book, wrapped up in a kerchief.
I must see her again. (*Going towards house.*)

1*st Lad* (*coming from house*). Are you off, Peer, already?
What, shirking the dance?

*Peer.* Not at all.

1*st Lad.* Then you're heading
Amiss. (*Tries to turn him round.*)

*Peer* (*throwing him off, passing L.*). Let me pass.

1*st Lad.* Don't you want to meet Aslak?
Afraid of his fists?

*Peer.* I afraid?

1*st Lad.* Yes. Remember
(*Jeering, and doubling up his fists playfully.*)
What was it that chanced when you met him at Lundë?
(* *He goes off laughing to the dancing-green, R. Enter* Solveig.)

*Solveig* (* *in doorway of house*).
Are you not the lad who was wanting to dance?

*Peer* (* *taking her hand*).
Yes, of course it was me. Don't you know me again?
Come along!

*Solveig.* Mother says that we mustn't go far.

*Peer.* "Mother says! Mother says!" Were you born yesterday?

*Solveig.* You are joking!

*Peer.* Perhaps! but you're almost a child.
Are you not?

*Solveig.* No; I read with the pastor last spring.

*Peer.* Will you tell me your name?

*Solveig.* It is Solveig. And yours?

*Peer.* Mine's Peer Gynt.
(Bridegroom's Mother *comes out of house.*)

*Solveig* (*withdrawing her hand*).
Oh! (*Aside.*) Peer Gynt.

*Peer.* Well! and what about that?

*Solveig.* My—my garter is loose. I must tie it up tight.
(*Goes away from him, and exit L.*)
(2nd Lad *enters L., and talks, near refreshment table, to* 1st Girl.)

*Mads* (*pulling at his mother's gown as she crosses R.*).
But, mother, she will not!

*His Mother.* Why? What won't she do?
*Mads.* She won't open the door.
*His Mother.* What?
*Mads.* It's locked!
*His Father* (*rising angrily*). You great calf!
You're just fit for a stall.
*His Mother.* Now don't scold him, poor dear!
He'll be all right in time, if you let him alone.
(*They move away and exeunt*, Mother *R.*, Father *L.*)
(Mads *gazes after them, and then exit disconsolately up R.*)
*2nd Lad.* Hi, Peer! have some brandy.
*Peer.* No.
*2nd Lad.* Only a dram!
*Peer* (*darkly*). Have you got any?
*2nd Lad.* Well, I won't say but I have.
(*Pulls out flask, and drinks with much gusto.*)
How it stings in your throat. Take a pull. (*Enter* 1st Lad, *R.*)
*Peer.* Let me try. (*Drinks.*)
1*st Lad.* You must taste mine as well.
*Peer.* No.
1*st Lad.* Oh nonsense! It's prime.
Have a go, Peer. Come on now, and don't play the fool!
*Peer.* All right. Give me a drop. (*Enter* Feast-master, *R.*)
1*st Girl* (*leaving group L. and crossing R.*). Well! it's time we were off.
*Peer.* You're afraid of me, lass?
1*st Lad.* She has reason to be.
Who isn't?
*2nd Lad.* You've shown us the tricks you can play.
(*Enter* 2nd, 3rd, *and* 5th Girls, *R.*)
*Peer.* I can do more than that, if I once get a start.
(*Enter* 1st Man *and* 3rd Lad, *R.* 1st Woman, *L.*)
1*st Lad* (*aside to the rest*). Now he's forging ahead! (*Beckons off.*)
(*The other guests troop in, and group themselves round* Peer, *amused and eager.*)
1*st and 2nd Girls.* / 1*st and 2nd Lads.* Come along! Tell away!
*3rd Woman.* / 1*st Man.* What is it?

*Peer.* To-morrow I'll tell you.

(*Enter* Bridegroom.)

1*st and 2nd Lads.* }
1*st and 2nd Girls.* } No! now!

1*st Girl.* I say, Peer, can you conjure?

*Peer.* Yes; call up the devil.

1*st Man.* My grandam could do that before I was born.

*Peer.* That's a lie! What I do no one else ever can!
One day I did conjure him—into a nut.
It was worm-bored, you see!

1*st and 2nd Lads.* }
1*st Girl.* } (*laughing*). Ay! That's easily guessed.

*Peer.* He cursed and he wept and he offered a bribe
Of all sorts of fine things——

1*st Girl.* But he had to go in?

*Peer.* Ay! Of course! And I stopped up the hole with a peg.
Aha! If you'd heard him go grumbling about.

2*nd Girl.* Only think! (*Titters derisively aside.*)

*Peer.* Like a bumble-bee buzzing inside!

1*st Girl.* And he's still in the nut?

*Peer.* Not a bit of him. No!
He has flown on his way. (*Chuckles.*)
That's why Aslak's so cross.

(5th Girl *turns away offended, and talks aside.*)

Yes, the grudge the Smith bears me is all due to that.

1*st Lad.* Well?

*Peer.* I went to the smithy, and begged him to crack
That same nut for me. Ay! and he promised he would.
So he lays down the nut on his anvil, like that.
But Aslak, you know, is so clumsy of fist,
And swinging and slinging his hammer about——

1*st Man.* Did he kill the foul fiend?

*Peer.* He laid on like a man,
But the devil showed fight and flew off in a flame,
Through the roof with a bang, and nigh shattered the forge.

1*st and 2nd Girl.* And the Smith?

*Peer* (*chuckling*).
Just stood there, scorched and scarred on the hands.
And from that day to this we have never been friends.

(*General laughter.*)

*1st and 2nd Lads.* That's a royal good yarn.
*1st Man, 3rd Lad.* Ay, the last is his best.
*Peer.* Do you mean that you think I am making it up?
*1st Man.* That you're certainly not, for I've heard it myself. From my grandfather——
*Peer.* Liar! It happened to me.
*1st Man.* Yes; like everything else.
*Peer* (* *with a fling*). I can fly, I can ride
On the bravest of steeds, clear away through the air.
Ay, and many's the thing I will do ere I'm done.
(*Another roar of laughter.*)
*1st Girl* (*teasingly*).
Come, Peer! Let us see you. Just ride through the air.
*2nd and 3rd Girls.* } Do, dearest Peer Gynt.
*4th and 5th Girls.* }
*Peer.* I shall ride when I choose.
You don't need to tire yourself begging so hard.
For I'll ride like a hurricane over you all.
Every man in the parish shall fall at my feet!
*1st Man.* Now he's clean off his head.
*1st Lad.* He's a dolt and a fool.
*2nd Lad.* He's a braggart besides——
*3rd Lad.* And a liar to boot.
*Peer.* Only wait! (* *Threateningly.*)
*1st or 3rd Man* (* *half drunk*).
Wait yourself!—You'll soon roll in the dust.
*1st Lad.* With your eyes painted black.
*2nd Lad.* And your back beaten blue.
(* *The crowd disperses, the elder men angry, their juniors laughing and jeering.*)

NOTE.—*Some go off R., to fetch* ASLAK, *talking loudly and derisively. The* BRIDEGROOM *remains behind, and drifts up to* PEER.

*Mads.* I say! Is it true you can ride through the air?
*Peer* (*shortly*). It is all of it true. I'm a rare one, I am.
*Mads.* And true that you've got the invisible cloak?
*Peer* (*hatless*). The invisible hat, do you mean? Yes, I have.
(* *Turns away from him.* SOLVEIG *enters L., and crosses the yard with little* HELGA.)
*Peer* (* *goes towards them. His face lights up.*)

Ah, my Solveig! At last!—It is well you have come.
For now you shall see what a dancer I am. (* *Seizes her wrist.*)
*Solveig.* Oh! loose me!
*Peer.* And why?
*Solveig.* You're so wild.
*Peer.* To be sure!
I'm as wild as the reindeer, when Summer is nigh.
Come along, lass! Come!—do not be wayward and proud.
*Solveig.* I dare not—not now. (* *Withdraws her arm.*)
*Peer.* And why not, if you please?
*Solveig* (*sorrowfully*). You've been drinking.
(* *Moves off with* HELGA.)
*Peer.* Ah, God! Had I driven my knife
Through the hearts of them rather! The hearts of them all!
*Mads.* I say, Peer, can't you help me to get at the bride?
*Peer* (* *absently*). The bride? Why, where is she?
*Mads.* Locked up in the Store.
*Peer.* Ah, indeed? (*Indifferently.*)
*Mads* (*nearly crying*). Yes, and listen!—for any sake, do!
*Peer.* Oh rubbish! Be off, Mads! Go, find her yourself!
And yet—Ingrid—the Storehouse? (*Approaches* SOLVEIG.)
You still turn away?
(*Exit* HELGA, *L.*)
Ashamed to dance with me, because I'm in rags?
*Solveig.* No. That isn't the truth; it is not that at all.
*Peer.* Yes, it is; and besides—yes, I have had a drop!—
But that was because you had hurt me.
*Solveig* (*sorrowfully*). Not now.
For even if I wished to, I dared not.
*Peer.* Of whom
Are you frightened?
*Solveig.* Of father.
*Peer.* Your father? I see.
He is one who condemns? (*Sneering.*) He is "godly," of course.
Is that it?
*Solveig* (*hesitating*). You mean he——
*Peer.* Sings psalms, I suppose?
And you and your mother? Do you sing them too?
Will you speak? (*Takes her hand again.*)
*Solveig.* Let me go.

*Peer* (** in a low but sharp and threatening tone*).
No! I'll never do that.
But listen! I'll turn myself into a Troll!
When the clock's striking twelve I'll be with you to-night.
[If you hear a strange noise—some one gasping and wheezing,
Don't flatter yourself that it's only the cat,
Hissing, spitting beside you; for *I* will be there.
In the blackness I'll drain out your life's blood, and then
I will eat little Helga, your sister! You know]
I'm a vampire—a werewolf, that roams through the dark,
And I'll gnaw you all over!
(** Suddenly changes his tone, and entreats, as if afraid.*)
Ah! dance with me, Solveig!
*Solveig* (*shuddering, and * looking at him in* [1] *displeasure*).
I cannot! Not now! You were ugly just then.
(** Goes into the house.*)
*Mads* (*sidling up to* PEER).
Peer, I'll give you an ox, if you'll help.
*Peer* (*recklessly*). Well, come on.
(*They go out together behind the house. At the same time* ASLAK *enters R., followed by the others. Loud talk and hubbub, the men excited, some drunk. At the same time old* HEGSTAD *comes out of the house with* SOLVEIG, HELGA, *and her parents. Others stand looking on.* BRIDEGROOM'S MOTHER *enters R.,* FATHER *L., and meet L.C.*)
*Hegstad* (*striding forward to meet the* SMITH).
Keep the peace!
*Aslak* (** flinging away his jacket*).
Peace be damned!—We shall fight it out here.
Either Peer Gynt or I must be taught which is master.
*Feast-master.*
1*st Man.*
2*nd and* 3*rd Lads.* } Ay, ay! Best fight it out.
1*st Lad,* 1*st,* 2*nd, and* 3*rd Girls.* No! No! No! Only chaff!
*Aslak.* Our fists shall decide, for the case is past speaking.
*Solveig's Father.* Control yourself, man! (*Argues with him.*)
*Helga* (*clinging to her mother*).
Will they beat him? Oh, mother!
1*st Lad.* It is far better sport just to taunt him with lying.

[1] *Lit.* darkly.

*1st or 3rd Man* (*drunk*).
No, no! kick him out! He's not fit to be here.
*2nd Lad.* Kick him out!
*1st Man.* Kick him out!
*2nd Lad.* You're not climbing down, Aslak?
*Aslak.* What! Me?—backing out? He shall bleed for his slanders!
*Solveig's Mother.*
You see now, my child, what is thought of that oaf!
(*Enter* Åse, *L.*, * *with a stick in her hand.*)
*Åse.* Is that son of mine here? Now he's in for a drubbing.
I will heartily ding him——
*Aslak* (* *rolling up his sleeves*). That switch is too light
For a carcase like his. (*Breaks it across his knee.*)
*2nd Lad.* Leave the Smith to the work.
*1st Man, 3rd Lad.* He will ding him—and dang him.
*Aslak* (* *spitting on his hands and nodding to* Åse).
And willingly hang him!
*Åse.* What! Hang my own Peer? Just you try, if you dare!
~~With my teeth and my claws I'll——~~ tooth and nail I will fight. ah! Where is he?—Peer! Peer!
(*Crosses R., looking for him.*)
(* *Enter* Mads Moen, *running.*)
*Mads.* Heaven save us and help us! My father! My mother! Come quickly!
*His Father.* What is it?
*Mads.* Just fancy! Peer Gynt——
(Hegstad *rushes off, followed by several lads and girls.*)
*Åse* (* *screaming*). Ah! He's taken his life!
*Mads.* No, but Peer—on the hillside! Look there!
*1st Lad and Crowd.* With the bride!
(Solveig, *drooping sorrowfully, lays her head on her mother's shoulder.*)
*Åse* (* *letting her stick sink*). Oh, the beast!
*Aslak* (* *thunderstruck*). Where the slope
Rises sheerest, he clambers, by God!—like a goat!
*Mads* (* *crying*).
And he shoulders her, mother, as I might a pig.
*Åse* (* *shaking her fist at him*).
Would to God you might fall!

(* *Screaming with terror.*)
Ah! take care of your footing!

*Hegstad* (* *coming back bareheaded and white with rage*).
I'll have your son's life for this villainy yet.

*Åse.* Not his life!—Never that! God will save him, through me.
(*Kneels, and lifts her hands in prayer.*)

CURTAIN.

Music. Ingrid's Lament.—Curtain up just before it ends.

SCENE IV.

* *A narrow path, high up in the mountains. Early morning.* PEER GYNT *comes hastily and sullenly along the path.* INGRID, *still wearing some of her bridal ornaments, is trying to hold him back.*

SUGGESTION.—*If it is possible to arrange for a gradual sunrise, it is more effective to discover the actors already on the stage. The curtain should rise while* "INGRID'S LAMENT" *is being played, and the red dawn gradually show her standing, desolate and bowed, with her back to the audience, at the back of the stage.* PEER *is standing, R., with his foot on a fallen tree, his elbow on his knee, and his chin in his hand, moody and sullen. As the music dies away,* INGRID *dries her eyes, throws back her dishevelled locks, and, advancing towards* PEER, *lays a hand pleadingly on his shoulder.*

*Peer.* Get you from me!
*Ingrid.* Peer!—ah, whither?
Whither *now*?
*Peer.* Where fancy leads you.
*Ingrid.* Oh! the falsehood!
*Peer.* Useless railing.
From this hour our ways lie parted.
*Ingrid.* Parted—never! Peer, remember!
*Peer.* Devil take all recollection!
Devil take the tribe of women
—All but one!
*Ingrid.* And who is she, pray?
*Peer.* 'Tis not you.
*Ingrid.* Again, I ask you!
*Who* is she?

*Peer.* Off to your father!
Go back thither where I found you.
*Ingrid.* Peer—my dear one!
*Peer.* Peace!
*Ingrid.* Ah, listen!
You forget—you cannot mean it!
*Peer.* Can—and do!
*Ingrid.* Ah! never, never!
First to lure, then to forsake me!
*Peer.* Why not? What have you to offer?
Speak—your terms!
*Ingrid.* The farm at Hegstad!
Ay—and more!
*Peer.* Is *that* all? Tell me!
Is your psalm-book in your kerchief?
Is your hair all soft and golden?
Are you ever glancing downward
Shyly—to your mother clinging?
Speak, I tell you!
*Ingrid.* Peer! I cannot.[1]
*Peer.* Went you to the church at Easter,
[To the pastor?
*Ingrid.* No!—but hear me!
*Peer.* Are your glances soft, reluctant?
When I beg, can you deny me?
*Ingrid.* Cross of woe! His wits are going!]
*Peer.* Is your very presence hallowed?
*Ingrid.* No, but Peer——!
*Peer.* There's naught else matters. (* *Going.*)
*Ingrid* (* *blocking his way*). Do you know what you are doing?
—That your very life is forfeit
If you dare forsake——
*Peer.* I care not!
*Ingrid.* If you wed me, wealth and honour
Will be yours.
*Peer.* Such wealth's too costly.
*Ingrid.* You decoyed me! (* *Weeping.*)
*Peer.* You were willing.
*Ingrid.* Desperate I was—half frantic.

[1] Ingrid is motherless.

*Peer.* And I—surely drunk or crazy !
*Ingrid.* You shall pay for this—and dearly !
*Peer.* Dearest payment will be welcome,
So I'm free !
*Ingrid.* Your face is set, then ?
*Peer.* Yes, like flint.
*Ingrid.* Well, who's the winner
We shall see before this closes. (* *Going downwards.*)
*Peer* (* *stands silent a moment and then cries :*)
Devil take all recollection !
Devil take the tribe of women !
*Ingrid* (* *turning her head and calling scornfully upwards :*)
All but one !
*Peer.* Yes, all but one. (*Exit* Ingrid.)

. . . . . .

The brave golden eagles are soaring,
And southward the wild geese fly.
While here I have stumbled and fallen,
They have spread their great wings ~~to fly~~ on high .
I'll follow them ! Rise to the summit,
And wash myself pure in the rain ;
I'll bathe in the winds of heaven,
Fly, climb, till I'm clean again.
Then forth o'er the salt sea waters !

. . . . .

A song rings out, calling to me :
" Peer Gynt ! thou art come of great things,
And great things shall come of thee ! "

(* *Leaps forward, but runs his head against a rock, falls, and remains stretched on the ground.*)

Curtain.

*In the original, the scene ends with* Ingrid's *exit, and* Scene 5 *follows immediately.* Peer's *soliloquy inserted here is taken from a monologue slightly later in the piece. It is preceded by a strange interlude of a lyrical character in which a curious refrain is chanted in unison by three madcap young girls on the mountain side. They have been forsaken by their lovers, and are calling wildly to the Trolls to come and fill their places.*

PEER *greets them in reckless mood, "Heavy of heart and wanton in mind," and finally dances away with them over the heights, to plunge into heedless dissipation. We see him next newly awakened from a drunken sleep, wandering among the snows, with dizzy head and aching limbs; and there he pronounces the lines quoted above. It is the fever brought on by the shock of the fall mentioned above which brings on the delirium of his scene among the Trolls. The details of his accident will give the manager no little thought, for it must on no account look ridiculous. The important point is that the audience should realise that it is a serious accident, and that he is left unconscious. Some accompaniment of sliding snow or falling boulders would probably give the necessary thrill. If this cannot be effectively carried out, the programme should record the incident among the omitted scenes. It is no doubt partly symbolic; for an outbreak of good resolutions of a very ambitious type is apt to be followed by a totally unexpected and very serious fall.*

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## SCENE V.

* *Near a mountain tarn. The ground is soft and marshy round about. A storm is gathering.* ÅSE *enters, calling and gazing round her despairingly in every direction.* SOLVEIG, *who follows, has some difficulty in keeping up with her.*

(*Thunder and lightning.*)

*Åse* (*gesticulating wildly and tearing her hair*).

All's against me!—for wild is the night—
Mad the storm as it echoes around.
Black darkness and mist! There's no light—
Ah! where is my boy to be found?
The mountains that threaten!—the strife
Of the winds and the waters below!
The people out after his life!
God knows they shan't have it!—no, no!

(*Sitting R.C., on a log, and speaking to* SOLVEIG.)

To think that my Peer, who would shirk
And romance and tell wonderful lies—
Who did never a stroke of real work—
Should do this!—Yet, I saw with these eyes!

Oh! a body could laugh!—ay, indeed,
If only the tears would hold back.
My Peer!—in the time of our need
How he clung to his mother!—alack!
It was sorrow that drew us so near.
For his father he drank—like a sot!
Prated, roistered, and wasted our gear;
And we two sat at home, and forgot
If we could, what the morning would bring.
And then fairy-tales helped us. I'd tell
Him of Trolls and hobgoblins; and sing
About princes—and bride-rapes as well.
But who would have thought—who could dream—
That such nonsense would stick in his head?

*Helga* (*without*). Solveig! are you there?

*Åse* (*rising * in a fresh access of terror*). There's a scream.

[*Enter* Helga.

We have nixies and kelpies to dread.

(* *She runs to the top of a little rise, and looks out over the tarn. Thunder and lightning. Enter* Solveig's Parents, *L.*)

Ah, where is my boy!—where is he?

*Mother.* [1] Not a sign to be seen. (*Goes to* Solveig, *who clings to her, R.C.*)

*Father.* Still astray.

Evil news!

*Åse* (*C.*). My lost laddie! (*Weeping.*) Ay me!

*Father* (*R.C., * nods, mildly*). You may say so—he's lost.

*Åse.* Woe the day!

But he can't be!—He's clever, you know.
There's no one like him.

*Father.* So you say,
Foolish woman!

*Åse.* Ay, may be 'tis so.
*I* am foolish—but *he* is all right.

*Father* (* *still gently, and with a mild expression*).
He is lost, through his hardness of heart.

*Åse* (* *in terror*). No, no! He will come to the Light!

*Father.* If he does, he must first do his part.

[1] In the original this is said by Åse, but the dumb entrance of the other mother was found very difficult.

Can he sigh for his sins and repent?
*Åse.* Not yet, but (*eagerly*) he'll ride through the air.
*Mother* (*laying a hand on her husband's arm*).
Heaven help her! She's crazy and spent
With her sorrow.
*Father* (*to Åse*). What say you?
*Åse.* It's Peer!
He *can* ride! Not a deed is too great
For his doing, and listen, you'll see
If only he lives——
*Father.* It's too late
For mere promises. Better, maybe,
If you saw him aloft on the gallows.
(Solveig *buries her head on her mother's breast.*)
*Åse* (*shrieking*). Oh, merciful Saviour!
*Father.* His heart
Might then turn to contrition, that hallows
And softens.
*Åse.* Not that way! (*Going R.*) We'll start
Once again. Seek him! Find him and save!
*Father.* We will rescue his soul.
*Åse.* Body too.
For the marshes would fain be his grave,
But we'll drag him out; or, if it's true
That he's Troll-bound, the church bells will ring.
*Solveig* (*R.C.*). [1] You are wearied and worn—won't you stay?
*Father.* The sheep-track we'll try—that's the thing.
*Åse.* Ah! the Lord of all good will repay
You your guidance and help to the poor——
*Father* (*going R.C.*). As a Christian 'twas meet.
*Åse* (*going L.*). I daresay!
But the neighbours thought otherwise. Sure,
They are heathens! Not one left the dale
To come with us.
*Father.* Of course not. They know
Just how worthless he is. (*Examines ground.*)
*Åse* (*defiantly*). They shall quail
Before him!—if they don't let him go,
Safe and sound. Think! his life is at stake!

[1] This line is interpolated, to complete the verse.

*Father.* Here are tracks!
*Åse.* Then go forward again.
*Father.* We shall follow the pathway, and make
For the mountain.

[*Exit with his wife and* HELGA, *R.*

*Solveig.* Say on, make it plain.
*Åse* (*smiling*). What! begin once again and recall
What I told of my laddie before?
It would weary you, child, to tell all.
*Solveig* (*kneeling beside her*).
You will tire ere I weary. Tell *more*!

CURTAIN.

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## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

* *A hillside, wooded with great soughing leafy trees. Stars are shining through the leaves; birds are singing in the tree-tops.* A GREEN-CLAD WOMAN *is crossing the hill-side.* PEER GYNT *follows her with lover-like gestures and antics.*

*Green* (*R.C., turning after crossing*).
And is it true?
*Peer* (*C., * drawing his finger across his throat*).
In troth as true—
As true as you are fair to see.
Come, have me, wont you? You shall find
I'm just the man for you. *So* kind,
You'll feast all day—and all night too!
No wool to card! No thread to spin!
I'll never pull your hair——
*Green.* You're sure?
Nor beat me?
*Peer.* Can you think I would.
To strike a woman? Never, bah!
We sons of kings ne'er do the like.
*Green.* A king's son are you?

*Peer.* Yes.
*Green.* And I'm
The daughter of the Dovrë king.
*Peer.* A princess? You're the mate for me.
*Green* (*advancing R.*).
[1] Deep down in the Rondë has father his palace.
*Peer.* My mother's is bigger, or else I'm mistaken.
*Green.* You've heard of my father? His name is King Brosë.
*Peer.* You've heard of my mother? Her name is Queen Åse.
*Green.* When father is angry the mountains are riven.
*Peer.* They reel and they rock when my mother's a-scolding.
*Green* (*crossing L.*).
My father can spring with a bound to the rafters.
*Peer* (*R.C.*). My mother can ride through the rapidest river.
*Green.* Why, then, are these rags all the garments you have?
*Peer.* Ah! wait till you see me set out on a Sunday!
(*Goes back C.*)
*Green.* On week-days my gown gleams all silken and gold.
*Peer* (*L.C.*).
Well, it looks to me now more like grasses and straws.
*Green.*
Ay! There's one thing, remember!—the Rondë folks' wont
Is to guard all possessions by doubling their form.
When you come to the gate of my father's old hall,
You may only see stones lying heaped on the ground.
*Peer.* And to you, just precisely the same might befall;
For the gold in our hall looks like litter and trash.
And the glass in the windows like stockings and clouts.
*Green.* Black it seems white then, and foul it seems fair?
*Peer.* Mountains are mole-hills, and common things rare.
*Green.* We are made for each other! I knew it! Ah, Peer!
*Peer* (*embracing her*).
Like the leg and the trouser, the comb and the hair!
*Green* (* *calling away over the hillside*).
Bridal steed, come to me! Bridal steed, Ho!

**An enormous pig comes running in with a rope's end for a bridle*

[1] Readers familiar with the version by the Messrs Archer will recognise that some passages in these Troll scenes adhere to it very closely, actual phrases here being left unaltered more frequently than in any of the other scenes.

*and an old sack for a saddle.* PEER GYNT *vaults on its back and seats the* GREEN-CLAD ONE *in front of him.*

*Peer.* Through the gate of the Rondë we'll galloping go!
*Green.* And to think that so lately, all heavy with woe
I sighed and lamented!—How little we know
What the future is bringing—how fortune may smile.
*Peer* (** thrashing the pig and trotting off*).
And the great ones are known by their riding in style!

NOTE.—*The pig signifies sensuality, and is therefore exceedingly appropriate here, from the point of view of the student of symbology. To the average audience, it is a more or less ridiculous piece of mechanism; to the manager a source of expense and annoyance, and to the actors a weariness of the flesh. Consequently this incident is much better omitted; in which case this scene should be run on into the succeeding one, the back cloth rising to reveal the rocky throne of the* TROLL-KING, *and the* TROLLS *pouring in from either side, sweeping in between* PEER *and the* PRINCESS, *and circling madly round them, angry and indignant. The* PRINCESS *breaks through her circle, which should be less violent and more expostulatory than* PEER'S, *and appeals distractedly to her father, who listens attentively till he mounts his throne, when she takes her place on his left hand, and her sister, who is dressed in pink and wears a pig's head, seats herself at his other side, but lower on the rocky steps. Most of the actors in this scene, though fantastically disguised, should yet be recognisable as feverish nightmare reproductions of the wedding guests, and the whole action should be reminiscent, though not obtrusively so, of the wedding festivities. The* KING *is played by the same actor who took the farmer's part, and his throne is placed where the fiddler's table stood* (C. *back*). ASLAK *and the* FEAST-MASTER *are the* 1ST *and* 2ND COURTIERS. *The* TWO LADS *who offered* PEER *brandy are the* PIG-HEADED TROLLS *who bring him refreshments. The older women are the* WITCHES, *and the children among the guests the* IMPS. *The* GREEN-CLAD ONE *is a dream edition of* INGRID, *etc., etc. The first wild entrance should suggest autumn leaves whirling before the wind, and the colouring should consist of soft greys and browns, greens and yellows, and woodland tones, with just a touch or two of scarlet here and there. The lighting*

*should change and vary, giving as weird an effect as possible, but the* KING *and* PEER *and other principal speakers should always be clearly seen. Later in the drama, in a monologue uttered while looking at the sphinx in Egypt,* PEER *refers to the* TROLL KING *and the* GREAT BOYG *as people "from fairy-tales," whom he had "seen in a dream while he lay in a fever," so there is no doubt about the character of the scene as conceived by the poet;* i.e. *it certainly represents delirium.*

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### SCENE II.

*The Royal Hall of the King of the Dovrë-Trolls. A great assembly of Troll-courtiers, gnomes, brownies, witches, imps, etc. The* OLD MAN *of the Dovrë sits on a throne, with a crown on his head and his sceptre in his hand. His children are ranged near him. Violent commotion in the Hall.* PEER GYNT *stands before the* KING.

NOTE.—*The chief difficulty of this scene lies in the fact that it is largely duologue, and that there is little or no action possible for the crowd of attendant Trolls during the discussion. They must consequently make the most of any opportunities of displaying interest and emotion;* e.g. *showing pride and delight in their* KING, *and much wrath and indignation over* PEER'S *aspersions on their kingdom or customs; but on no account must their business distract the attention of the audience from the subject in hand. Some of them have animal heads, others entire animal*[1] *forms—elephants, boars, bears, etc.*

*All the Trolls* (*howling with rage*).
Kill him! Slay him! Torture! Slay!
1*st Courtier* (*R.C.*). The Dovrë king's own loveliest maid!
2*nd Courtier* (*L.C.*). Deluded by a Christian man!
1*st Imp* (*R.C.*). Oh, let me hack him on the thumbs!
2*nd Imp* (*L.C.*). And may I drag him by the hair?
1*st Maiden* (*R.*). Ugh! let me bite him ere he goes.
1*st Witch* (* *with a ladle*). Shall he be boiled into broth and bree?
2*nd Witch.*
Shall we roast him or stew him or brown him or bake?

[1] Swedenborg, the Scandinavian mystic, asserts that the spirit-world abounds in animal forms. On this point also, see Introduction.

*Dovrë King.* Come! ice to your blood friends.
(* *Beckons his counsellors round him.*)
Don't let us talk big.
(*The* Trolls *group themselves in two lines, curtsey and bow.*)
We've been drifting astern for a year or two back,
And recruits are all wanted. The lad's strongly built.
He has only one head—but that's scarcely a flaw,
For our three-headed Trolls are now quite out of date,
And my daughter herself is contented with one.

. . . . . .

(*To Peer.*) It's the princess, my daughter, you're asking from me?
*Peer.* Yes, herself with the realm as her dowry of course.
*King.* The realm? You'll have half of it while I'm alive,
And the other half later when I come to die.
*Peer.* That's agreed. I'm content.
*King.* Ay, but stop there a bit.
You've conditions to sign, undertakings to give.
If you break even one the whole bargain falls through,
And you'll never get out of the palace alive.
First of all you must swear that you'll never give heed
To anything outside the Rondë hill's bounds.
Day and work you must shun and the light of the sun.
*Peer.* If you'll let me be king that is easy to keep.
*King.* And next—now for putting your wits to the test.
Ahem! (*Draws himself up.*)
1*st Courtier* (*advancing to* Peer).
Let us see if your best wisdom tooth
Can avail here, to crack you the king's riddle-nut.
*King.* What difference is there 'twixt mankind and Trolls?
*Peer.* No difference at all in so far as I see.
Big Trolls would roast you and small Trolls would claw,
And with us it were likewise if only we dared.
*King.* True enough! For in that and in more we're alike.
But yet there's a difference. Now listen! give heed!
(*The* Trolls *lean forward, listening intently.*)
Among men, in the light of the sun, up above,
There's a motto that runs, "Man, arise!—be thyself!"
But at home among us in the tribe of the Trolls
The saying goes, "Troll! to thyself be—enough!"
(*The* Trolls *resume their previous positions with a sigh of satisfaction.*)

1*st Courtier.* Can you fathom the depth?
*Peer* (*shaking his head*). Somewhat dark and obscure.
*King.* Yet, my son, that "Enough" must be deeply engraved
On your scutcheon and heart. Yes, that sundering word,
So potent and strong ——!
*Peer* (* *scratching his head*). But look here!
*King.* No escape!
It must be, or you never can reign here as king.
*Peer.* Oh well, let it pass. After all, what's the odds?
*King.* Then another point. Here you must learn to enjoy
Our homely and everyday manner of life.
No yearnings or cravings for something beyond.
(* *He beckons, and two* Trolls, *with pigs' heads and white night-caps, etc., bring in food and drink.*)

(*A grinning* Imp *fills the bowl from the flagon afterwards introduced in Act III.*)

The food that we eat and the drink that we drink
Must suffice. It's homebrewed, so it's wrong to despise it.
*Peer* (*pushing the things away from him*).
Homebrewed? Oh, the devil, be off with you, do!
I shall never get used to the ways of this land.
*King.* The bowl will be yours; it is fashioned of gold,
And the love of my daughter goes with it—thrown in!
*Peer* (*pondering*).
It is said, "Thou shalt bridle the natural man."
And I daresay a taste for the liquor may grow.
(*Drinks with grimaces and then chokes. The* Imps *wriggle with joy, and the other* Trolls *chuckle together softly.*)
*King.* Very wisely pronounced! What, you spit?
*Peer.* Well—at first.
It is custom that's needed—just habit—that's all.
*King.*
Now then! Next, you must throw off your Christian-man's garb;
(*The two pig-headed* Trolls *advance and pull off* Peer's *breeches.* 1st *and* 2nd Witches *tear off his coat.*)
For we've no foreign imports. Home-grown and home-made
Are our garments. There's nought here allowed from the plains
Save the dainty silk bows at the ends of our tails.
(*The* Trolls *display their garments and tails with complacency.*)

*Peer* (*indignantly*). But I haven't a tail.

*King* (*rising and advancing L.C.*). You must get one, of course.
See my Sunday tail, Chamberlain, well fastened on.

(1st Courtier *receives tail from two* Troll-Maidens, *R., and approaches* Peer. *Exit* Green-Clad One, *L.*)

*Peer.* I'll be hanged if you do! Would you make me an ass?

*King.* None comes courting my child with no tail at his rear.

*Peer.* Make a beast of a man!

*King.* Nay, my son, you mistake.
I but make you a mannerly wooer—no more.
See! a flame-coloured bow we'll allow you to wear,
An honour indeed in the kingdom of Trolls!

*Peer* (* *reflectively*). Well, it's wisest to follow the fashion a bit.
And "a man's but a mote," say the wise. Tie away!

(1st Courtier *fastens it on while the* Imps *hover round, grinning with delight.*)

1*st Courtier.* Let us see with what grace it will waggle and whisk.

(*The smaller* Imps *take* Peer's *hands and whirl him round.* Trolls *applaud.*)

*Peer* (* *peevishly*).
Would you force me to go to all lengths? To renounce
All I have? (*To* King.) Must I give up religion and faith?

*King* (*ironically*).
*Your* faith as a Christian? No, keep that in peace!
All doctrine goes free without tribute or *duty*!
For the Troll folk are known by appearance and show,
And if only we're one in our manners and dress,
You may hold as a faith what to us is a farce.

*Peer.* Why, in spite of your many conditions, you seem
A more tolerant chap than I'd ever have guessed.

*King.* Yes! We Trolls are less black than we're painted, my son.
That's another distinction 'twixt us and mankind.
But the serious part of the meeting is over.
So let us rejoice! Set the Dovrë harp sounding.
Let minstrels and dancing-maids gladden our Hall!

(*Returns to his throne.* * *Music and a dance.*)

Note.—*The music Greig has written for this dance begins very softly and increases in speed and volume till it ends in wild, crashing chords, fortissimo. All through it the throb of the*

*fevered pulse is heard, growing faster and more insistent, till the height of delirium is reached. Just before the opening bars, the* Green-Clad One *enters, L., partially disguised as a cow—a frequent transformation of the seductive Troll-maiden in old Norse legends;* i.e. *she should wear a mask representing the head and horns, and have a cloak like a hide and tail thrown loosely over her shoulders. She receives a harp from the* Troll-Maidens, *seats herself on a rocky mound, and strums on her instrument in time to the music, swaying fantastically. The* Courtiers *conduct her little sister with the pig's head to the centre of the stage, bow low to her, signal with their wands to the other* Trolls *to do likewise, and return to their places, pacing circle-wise with burlesque dignity. The little pig dances alone at first, doing quaint little jig steps, and making funny little gestures with her trotters. Presently the little* Imps *who have crouched near, watching her, spring up and join in. Then, as she dances back to her place beside the king, the younger* Trolls *all give a weird howl and circle round the stage in two long lines—a sort of crazy follow-my-leader dance. Towards the end,* Peer, *who has been watching in bewilderment, is whirled into the middle of the stage by several witches and maidens in turn. Finally he is rushed up and down between two of them, laughing deliriously, and left seated in the centre, breathless and dizzy, while the* Trolls *return to their places. The lighting should vary effectively, and the movements throughout suggest the dream-world rather than the physical plane. The* Green-Clad One *and her little sister appear as the dance ends, without their masks, after having been lost to sight for a little.*

1*st Courtier.* Do you like it so far?
*Peer.* What? The dance? Well—ahem!
*King.* Speak out frankly, my son. Pray now what did you see?
*Peer.* Why, sir, much that was weird and uncanny besides.
A bell-cow that strummed on a harp with her hoof,
While a pig in pink socks tripped and skipped to the tune.
*Courtiers and all.* O—oh! Eat him!
*King.* No, no! He's but human as yet,
And his senses deceive him.
*Troll-Maidens.* His ears and his eyes
Must be torn from him. Ugh!

*Green* (** sobbing*). Yes! or this we must bear
When we dance and make music, my sister and I.
*Peer.* Oho! Was it you? Well, a joke at a feast
Must be pardoned and taken just as it is meant.
*Green.* Can you swear that you joked?
*Peer.* Both the music and dance
Were delightful—ay, truly!
(*A* Troll Cat *hisses and spits, springing at him.*)
The cat claw me else!
*King* (*shaking his head gravely*).
Yes! This same human nature's an obstinate thing!
[When it comes to a fight we may slash it a bit.
But the wound heals again, leaving scarcely a scar.
My dear son-in-law here is as pliant as most;
His own Christian garments were doffed in a trice
And he tasted our mead—tied behind him a tail!—
In short, seemed so willing, so keen to conform,
That I thought to myself the old Adam within him
Was banished for ever and kicked out of doors.
But lo! in a moment he's rampant again!]
My son, we must cure you.
(*He makes a sign to the* 2nd Courtier, *who is then given a mossy cushion, which he carries along the line of* Trolls, *L., receiving from them various sharp instruments.*)
*Peer* (*startled*). Why, what will you do?
*King.* Your left eye sees too clearly. I'll scratch it a bit
Till it squints like a Troll's, all askew. After that
What you see with it here will look regal and fine.
And then I'll just put out the other—right out.
(2nd Courtier *kneels, and offers him the instruments, which should be nightmare editions of surgical cutlery.*)
*Peer.* Are you drunk?
*King* (*comes down C.*). No! See, here are the glazier's tools!
When that window-pane's gone, you will recognise then
What a beauty your bride is, how lovely and fair.
And ne'er will your vision be troubled, as now,
With bell-cows a-harping, and pigs in pink socks.
*Peer.* This is madness!
1*st Courtier.* The Dovrë king's speaking. Then hark!
For it's you that are foolish and he that is wise.

*King.* Yes! The eyes that see straight are but fountains of tears.
Only think how much worry and sorrow and pain
You would shirk in this way, just by shutting it out.
*Peer.* That is true, and there's something I've read in the Book
Of an eye that offends (*thoughtfully*). If it *does*, "pluck it out."
But first tell me!—my sight—will it ever heal up?
Become healthy again?
*King.* Nevermore.
*Courtiers and Trolls and all.* Nevermore!
*Peer.* Then in that case I'll e'en take my leave of you all.
*King.* What! You'd leave us?
(*The* Trolls *give a threatening growl.*)
*Peer.* Of course! I would go my own way.
*King.* No, sir. Stop! It is easy to enter this hall,
But outwards the gate opens not.
*Courtiers and Trolls and all.* Nevermore!
*Peer.* You mean, you'll detain me by force?
*King.* Certainly!
Just listen to reason, Prince Peer. You have gifts—
Real *gifts*—for a post in the kingdom of Trolls.
Your behaviour, in fact, is now quite in our line!
And you'd fain be a Troll?
*Peer.* Well, perhaps in a way——
I could put up with losing a good many things
For a bride and a well-managed kingdom to boot.
But there is a limit to all things on earth.
[I accepted the tail—that is perfectly true—
But I surely can loose what your chamberlain tied.
And I dropped my old breeches—all ragged and torn!
But I daresay I'll manage to don them again,
And so shake myself free of your fashions and go.
I will swear, if you like, that a cow is a maid,
For it's always quite easy to swallow one's words.
But, to know one could never find freedom again!
That one can't even die and be done with it all!
To live on as a Hill-Troll the whole of one's days,
With retreat quite cut off, and one's treasure *all* here—
And the heart with it too, as it says in the Book.
No! that is a thing I will never accept.]
*King.* Now, as sure as I live I shall fly in a rage.

And I'm not to be trifled with when I do that.
You young pasty-faced loon! Do you know who I am?
To the princess, my daughter, you're duly betrothed.
You have compromised her——

*Peer* (*lightly*). And she's compromised me.

*King*. You *must* marry her now. You have promised and sworn.

*Peer*. Pooh!—An oath one can always eat up in a trice.

*King*. Do you dare to deny that you've longed and desired
To have her as your bride? That you've wooed her and won?

*Peer* (* *with a snort of contempt*).
Won a promise, no more! Who the deuce cares for that?

*King*. It is ever the same with this base human-kind!
The spirit you're willing to own with your lips,
But in fact nothing counts that your fists cannot touch.
(*The* Trolls *come a little nearer, listening intently.*)
Do you really believe that desires count for naught?
That your thoughts bear no fruit? That a promise is vain?

*Peer*. I'm still free. And you can't hold me here with your lies.
(*Angry murmurs from the* Trolls.)

*Green* (*L.C.*).
Listen! ere the year's out you will know to your cost,
You are bound; for a promise holds fast, and the fruit
Of your thoughts without fail must be gathered at last.

*Peer*. Open doors! Let me go!

(*A* Troll Wolf *rushes at him, howling.* Trolls *and* Imps *block his way, all uttering threatening cries, and* Peer, *going L.C., * mops the sweat off his brow.*)

Oh! Would I could wake!
(King *crosses down, R.*)

*Peer* (*C.*). Old man, do not act like a headstrong old bull.
And maiden, just listen! we'll soon come to terms.
(*Deliberately.*)
To begin with, I'm neither a prince, nor yet rich.
So you've nothing to gain by a marriage with me.
(*All give a howl of rage.*)

*Green*. Ah! (* *Faints, and is carried out by* Troll-Maidens.)

*King* (* *after looking at* Peer *in high disdain*).
Boys! dash him to shards on the rocks around!

*2nd Troll Imp*. Oh, dad! May we play at the wolf-game first?

*Maidens and Witches*. Or at eagle and owl?

*Other Trolls.* Or wild cat and grey mouse?

*King.* Yes; but quick, for I'm worried and sleepy. Good night.

(*Exit* King *up L. The* Trolls *bow deeply as he goes, and then with wild cries of exultation rush at* Peer. *The music of the dance is resumed. The* 1st *and* 2nd Courtiers *pace forward R., and stand enjoying the spectacle.*)

*Peer* (* *hunted by the* Troll-Imps).

Let me be, devil's imps!

(* *Tries to escape by chimney.*)

*Imps and Maidens* (*R.*). Ah! come brownies and Trolls!

*Witches.* Nixies, bite from behind!

*Peer* (* *trying to escape down cellar trap-door*). Ow!

*Imps and Maidens* (*L.*). Hold fast! Shut him in!

1*st Courtier.* Now the small fry are happy!

*Peer* (* *struggling with a small* Imp, *who is biting his ear*).

You fiend! Let me go!

2*nd Courtier* (* *hitting* Peer *across the fingers*).

Come! deal gently, you scamp, with a prince of the blood!

*Peer.* There's a rat-hole.

1*st Imp.* Be quick, brother nixies—close up!

*Peer.* The old one was bad, but the youngsters are worse.

*All.* Slash harder!

*Peer.* Oh! ow! were I only a mouse! (* *He falls.*)

*Imps and Trolls.*

Close the ring, close the ring! And now, *into his eyes*!

*Peer* (* *buried in a heap of* Imps).

Mother! help me! I die!

(* *Church bells sound far away.*)

*Imps and all.* Ah! the black frock awakes,

And the bells in the mountain ring—calling his kine!

(* *The* Trolls *take to flight in a confused uproar of yells and shrieks. The whole palace collapses, and everything disappears.*)

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## Scene III.

*Pitch Darkness.*

Peer Gynt *is heard, slashing and beating about him with a large bough.*

*Peer.* Answer, answer! Who are you?

*Voice.* Myself.
*Peer.* Clear the way!
*Voice.* Best go round about, Peer. The hill's roomy enough.
*Peer.* (** trying to force a passage elsewhere, but again striking on something*). But who are you?
*Voice.* Myself, Peer. Can you say the same?
*Peer.* I can say what I will, and my sabre can smite.
Mind yourself! Ha, ha! Hey! There's a blow that will crush.
Saul only slew hundreds, here thousands lie slain!
Who are *you*?
*Voice.* I'm myself.
*Peer.* Ugh! That stupid reply!
You may leave it alone. It means nothing to me.
Pray, what are you?
*Voice.* The [1] Boyg—*The Bowed One.*
*Peer.* Indeed?
Well! The riddle was black, now we might call it grey.
Clear the way, then, old Boyg!
*Voice.* Go round about, Peer.
*Peer.* I'll go *through.* (** Cuts and slashes.*)
There! He fell.
(** Tries to advance, but strikes again on something.*)
Are there more of you there?
*Voice.* Just the Boyg, Peer Gynt. Just the one only one,
It's the Boyg that was wounded—the Boyg that was hurt.
It's the Boyg that was dead, and the Boyg that's alive.
*Peer* (** throwing away the branch*).
That bough is bewitched! But I still have my fists.
(** Fights his way forward.*)
*Voice* (*ironically*).
Ah yes! Trust to your body, lad! Trust to your fists!
They will help you to climb! Héhé! Peer—and his fists!
*Peer* (*discouraged, falling back again*).
I go forward or back, and it's just as far!
Outside or in, it's as cramped and as strait.
He is there—and there—and he's round the bend.
No sooner I'm out, than I'm back in the ring.
Name your name! Let me see you! What are you?

[1] In these lines the word *Boyg* must occasionally be pronounced with sufficient deliberation to give it the value of two syllables.

*Voice.* The Boyg.

*Peer* (*with growing horror, * groping round*).

Not alive, and not dead, only slimy and dim.
Not so much as a shape! It's as bad as a fight
With a set of great bears, just awaking and grim.
(* *Screaming.*) Ah! Strike back at me, can't you?

*Voice.* The Boyg isn't mad.

*Peer.* Is he not? Well, then, *strike.*

*Voice.* No! the Boyg never strikes.

*Peer.* Fight! You shall!

*Voice.* The Great Boyg never fights. He just wins.

*Peer.* Oh! If only a nixie were here to torment me!
An imp of a Troll! Only something to fight!
But here there is nothing. (Boyg *grunts.*) And now he is snoring!
Hi, Boyg!

*Voice.* What would you?

*Peer.* Use force.

*Voice.* At all times.
The Boyg conquers without. Acquiescence is best.

*Peer* (* *biting his own arms and hands*).

Never that! Ah! I'll set my own teeth in my flesh.
Feel the warmth of my blood! Else I die!

(* *A sound is heard like the wing-strokes of great birds.*)

*Bird-cries.* Got him, Boyg?
Will he come?

*Voice.* Step by step.

*Bird-cries.* Come, then!—sisters afar!
Gather here to the Tryst! Sisters, *here*! To the Tryst!

*Peer.* Dearest lass, if you'd save me, 'tis now you must act.
Quick! Your psalm book! Nay, clasp it not, bending so low,
Gently gazing adown. Hurl it straight in his eyes!

*Bird-cries* (*exultant*). Ah! He totters. He's ours.

*Voice.* Yes! we have him!

*Bird-cries.* Make haste!

*Peer.* Ah, too dearly we pay for renewal of life
In such battles as these. Better yield——

(* *Sinks down*).

*Bird-cries.* He is down!
He is fallen!—Ah! Seize him!

*Peer.* My Solveig! Ah, come!

(* *Sound of bells and of psalm-singing.* *The* Boyg *shrinks to nothing.*)

*Solveig and Choir sing behind.*

[1] Even as a bird out of the fowler's snare
Escapes away, so is our soul set free.
Broke are their nets and thus escaped we.
Therefore our help is in the Lord's great name,
Who heaven and earth by His great power did frame.

*Voice* (* *with a gasp*).

Too strong! Far too strong! There were women behind!

Note.—*The next scene should follow straight on without a curtain.*

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## Scene III.

* *The mountain-side in front of Åse's mountain-dairy. The door is shut. All is silent and deserted.* Peer Gynt *is lying asleep, L., by the wall.*

*Peer* (* *wakening and looking about him with dull and heavy eyes*).

[2] What is it, that far-off chiming?
What weighs on my eyes like lead?
My forehead is aching and throbbing.
Who bound this about my head?—
This ring made of red-hot iron?
What has come to this throat of mine?
And what wouldn't I give for a herring
Well pickled in salt and brine. (* *Spits.*)

(*Enter* Helga, *R., carrying a basket.*)

Hullo, child! and what are you after?

*Helga* (*C.*) (*stops and backs a step or two, shyly*).

'Twas Solveig who wanted me——

*Peer* (*springing up*). Where?

Where is she?

*Helga* (*pointing L.*). Behind the old sheiling.
She's waiting for me.

[1] This psalm—the 124th—was chosen for the Edinburgh performance because it is the historic psalm of deliverance used by the Scottish Church after times of persecution, and was familiar to the audience. It is sung to a fine old chorale, the "Old 124th."

[2] The first six lines are from the scene already referred to, in which Peer is seen newly awakened from a drunken sleep.

*Peer* (*going L.*). Here?
*Solveig* (* *unseen, up L.*). Take care!
I must go if you come any nearer.
*Peer.* Afraid of me still? (* *Stopping short.*)
*Solveig.* No. For shame!
*Peer.* If only you knew where I went to
Last night!—All the Dovrë-folk came!—
The king's daughter herself, like a gad-fly,
Is after me now, I daresay.
*Solveig.* It was well that the bells were set ringing.
*Peer* (*boastfully*).
No fear! They won't lure me astray.
Do you think that Peer Gynt's such a weakling?
Not he!
*Helga* (* *crying*). Oh! She's running away!
Stop, Solveig!—and wait for me. (* *Running after her.*)
*Peer* (* *catching her by the arm*). Listen!
She'll hear you and wait for you too.
Just look what I've found in my pocket!
A button of silver—for you.
You shall have it, if only you'll ask her—
From me——
*Helga.* Let me be—let me go!
*Peer.* I will never let go till you take it.
Here, child!
*Helga.* But I'm frightened!
*Peer.* No, no!
God help me! You turn from me also?
*Helga* (*crying*). My basket—my basket will fall!
*Peer.* There! Go then! But ask her—ask Solveig
To think of me sometimes—that's all. [*Exit* Helga.

Curtain.

## ACT III.

### Scene I.

*A room in Åse's house. Everything in disorder; boxes standing open; wearing apparel strewn around. A cat is lying on the bed.*

Åse *and* Kari *hard at work packing up and putting things straight.*

*Åse* (** running to one side*). Kari, Kari, come here!
*Kari.* Well, what now?
*Åse* (*stopping with a dazed look*).
Where is it again? Tell me where?
Ay, where did I put it? Ah me!
I am out of my wits! Is it there?
It's the key! Where's the key of the chest?
*Kari.* In the keyhole, maybe.
*Åse.* Ay, of course,
And that rumbling I heard in the yard?
*Kari.* It was only the waggon and horse.
They are driving to Hegstad again
With the last load of goods from the farm.
*Åse* (** weeping*). Oh, Kari! I would they drove me
To the churchyard.
*Kari.* Hush!
*Åse.* Where is the harm?
Why shouldn't I speak? Who would care?
What sorrows a mortal lives through!
Heaven help me! The farm-house is bare.
They have robbed me of more than was due.
What old Hegstad had left has been ta'en
By the bailiff at last. Ah, the shame!
Yes! and shame on the *whole* of them there
That have judged me so harshly.
(** Seats herself on the edge of the bed.*)
Our name
Is a by-word. The farm-house and land
Are both lost to our line. For, you see,
The farmer was angry and hard;
And the law, yet more cruel to me,

Has scarce left the clothes on my back!
There was none to show mercy—not one;
And just now, too, when Peer was away,
My laddie—my one only son.
*Kari.* But the house will be yours till you die.
*Åse.* That's their charity! Yes, we've a roof
O'er our heads, poor old pussy and I. (*Stroking the cat.*)
*Kari.* Your Peer's cost you dear.
*Åse* (* *rising*). Why, what proof
Have you got against him? Ingrid's home
None the worse!—He was wrong, if you will,
But 'twas Satan himself was to blame;
So hold *him* to the reckoning still—
The great ugly beast that he is,
That would lead my poor laddie astray!
*Kari* (*shocked*). Mother Åse!
(Åse *totters.*)
I fear you are worse.
Shall I send for the parson to-day? (*Supports her.*)
*Åse* (*half sinking on to the bed*).
For the parson? Ay. Maybe 'tis time.
And yet—Heaven save me! (* *Starting up.*) No, no!
I'm his mother. I'm all that he has.
I must help him at need. Let them go!
Since the rest have proved heartless and cold,
The more need for old Åse to strive.
I can do something yet. Kari!—see!
They have left his old coat; heart alive!
How he's torn it! I'll patch it again.
What came of the hose, in the end?
*Kari.* In that heap of old rubbish and rags——
*Åse.* Ay, ay! They'll be easy to mend. (*Looking for them R.*)
Look at this! It's a ladle for lead.
He cast buttons with this; and I mind
That one day, when he came in and said
That he wanted more metal, "I'll find
You good metal," says John, and with that
—There was company there at the time—
"Here's King Christian's own coin to cast,"
Says poor John—without reason or rhyme—

And of course I'd have made more ado,
For we hadn't much silver to spare.
But you see he'd been drinking again,
So what was the use?—I declare
These are nothing but holes. (*Holds up hose.*)
*Kari.* That is true,
It is darning they want.
*Åse.* Put them there,
I may manage it some time; not now.
I will leave them and get me to rest,
I am feeling so weary somehow—
So broken and frail. Ay, it's best
Just to lay them aside—put them by.
They would fetch nothing now, anyway.
(*Joyfully.*) Woollen shirts! and quite good. Well, I'll try
To keep one at the least, if I may.
I might even perhaps keep them both,
The one he has on is so thin.
*Kari.* But, Åse!
*Åse.* Now, Kari, I say
Be quiet!
*Kari.* I fear it's a sin.
*Åse.* I tell you there's pardon for sinners.
Yes, pardon for this and all sin.

CURTAIN.

NOTE.—*The dramatic value of this scene lies entirely in the fact that it prepares the minds of the audience for* ÅSE'S *next appearance, on her death-bed. As far as the inner teaching is concerned it has less importance, and as the fact of* PEER'S *punishment is commented on elsewhere, it is not indispensable to the story; but if* ÅSE'S *search for her son on the mountain is omitted, this should be given if possible.*

## Scene II.

*In front of a settler's newly-built hut in the forest. A reindeer's horns over the door. The snow is lying deep all around. It is dusk.* Peer Gynt *is standing before the door measuring a large wooden bar against it.*

*Peer.* [1] I'll have done with it all—with this dwelling in mist,
And evermore dreaming one's senses away.
You're an outlaw, my lad, banished—no mother here
To spread you your table and bring you your food.
If you'd eat, my young friend, you must e'en help yourself,
Fetch your provender fresh from the forest and stream,
And split the great roots of the fir for your fire.

. . . . . .

Those that build their own houses must fell their own logs.
(*Laughing quietly.*)

. . . . . .

And when it is built they must fasten the door
With such bars as will keep out a kingdom of Trolls.

. . . . . .

They will come with the darkness. They'll knock at it still,
Crying, "Open, Peer Gynt! We're as nimble as thoughts.
We will enter—right in—you will ne'er shut us out."
(*Carries the bar forward, L., and begins to saw a piece off the end of it. As he takes up his saw, the melody of* Solveig's *Song of Faith is heard, and presently she enters, * on snow-shoes, with a shawl over her head, and a bundle in her hand.*)

*Solveig.* God prosper your labour! You sent for me here,
So you must not reject me. You called me. I've come.

*Peer.* Solveig! You! But I cannot believe—— Yet it's true!
You are with me? You are not afraid to come here?

*Solveig.* You sent me a message by Helga; and then
There were others that followed. I heard them in storm
And in stillness. For sometimes your mother would tell
Of your childhood. That called me—and dreams bore a part.
Then came nights that were heavy, and long empty days.
And they brought me the message that now I *must* come.
It seemed in the valley that life had sunk low

[1] The first eight lines are from an earlier scene, omitted in this edition.

And been quenched. Neither laughter nor tears would come free.
I was stifled. Now, doubting and fearing are o'er,
You may want me or not, but you need me. I'm here.
*Peer.* But your father?
*Solveig.* My father? In all the wide world
There is none I can call either father or mother.
I'm loosed from them all.
*Peer.* My own Solveig! So fair!
And to come to me now!
*Solveig.* Yes, to you—only you.
You are all that I have—friend, consoler! (*In tears.*) The worst
Was the parting from Helga—and father—and her
At whose breast I was borne. Ay—the leaving them all!
*Peer.* And you know of the doom that was passed in the spring?
Both my farm and my heritage forfeit and lost?
*Solveig.* What's your heritage worth—or the farm land to me?
It is you I have come to—forsaking my home.
*Peer.* And you know they may seize me, if found out of bounds?
*Solveig.* I have run all the way! When I met those that asked
"Whither go you?" I answered, "At last—I go home."
*Peer.* Ah, my Solveig! Away, then, with bars and with bolts!
What need of them now to keep out goblin thoughts?
If you've courage to dwell with the hunter up here,
Our home will be blest and secure from all ill.
Let me look at you! Nearer—and yet not too near—
Only look at you! Oh, you are radiant and pure!
In my arms let me lift you—so slender and light!
I could carry you ever, and never feel tired.
Ay! and hold you far off from me, dear! lest my touch,
All unworthy, should soil you, so lovely and warm.
And who would have thought I could draw you to me,
Just by longing and yearning by day and by night?
Here, you see, I've been building. It's ugly and mean.
It must down again, dear.
*Solveig.* No! However it be
You have built it; contented I'll dwell in it now.
One so lightly draws breath in the keen mountain air.
Not a breeze seemed to stir in the valley below.
That was partly what frightened me—drove me away!
But up here, with the pine branches waving o'erhead,

What a silence and song! Yes! I'm here in my home.]

*Peer.* Is it true? Are you sure of yourself? Can it last?

*Solveig.* The path I have trodden leads back nevermore.

*Peer.* You are mine, then. In—in! I would see you at home
In the hut I have built for you. Enter! Go in!
I must go to fetch fir-roots for fuel; for now
You shall sit in the warmth and the softness and glow
Of my fireside and hearth as the queen of it all.

(* *He opens the door and* Solveig *goes in. He stands still for a while, then laughs for joy and leaps into the air.*)

Ah! my Princess, my Queen! Now I've found her and won!
And my palace shall rise, founded firm on the rock.

(*He advances L.C., seizes his axe, and is about to move away. Enter the* Green-Clad One *up R., old and ugly, and clad in tattered garments. An ugly* Elf *limps after her, holding on to her skirt and carrying the flagon from which the* Troll's *mead was poured in Act II. The lights should change here, and this entrance is accompanied by muttered thunder.*)

*Green.* Good even, Peer lightfoot!

*Peer* (*startled*). What is it? Who's there?

*Green.* Just a couple of friends, Peer. Our home is near by.
We are neighbours.

*Peer.* Indeed! That is more than I know.

*Green.* Just as your hut was built, so mine built itself too.

*Peer.* I'm in haste. (*Turns to go.*)

*Green* (*following him*).
Yes, just like you! You always were that,
But you cannot outstrip me, my lad. You are mine!

(*The* Elf *limps forward R., and squats on the ground, listening with impish delight.*)

*Peer.* You're mistaken, good woman.

*Green.* Perhaps I was, once,
On the day when you promised such mighty fine things.

*Peer* (*turning*).
When I promised? What devil's own nonsense is this?

*Green.* You've forgotten the night when you drank with my sire?
You've forgotten——?

*Peer.* Forgot what I never have known?
What is this that you prate of? When last did we meet?

*Green.* Last time was the first. Very like you've forgot,

But it happened; and there in our Rondë folk's realm
There's a law that holds good. Ay! Believe it or not.
Still desires will take shape, thoughts are things, and exist.
(*Pointing to the* Elf.)
There's the pledge you withdrew—and the promise you broke.
Are you proud of it? Go to your father, my dear!
He is thirsty and faint, give him something to drink.
(*She urges the* Elf *across stage.*)

*Peer.*
You are mad—you are drunk! What! You dare to call that——
(*Seizing the* Elf *roughly.*)

*Green.* I should think you would know him, without more ado.
He is lame in his shank, as you're lame in your soul.

*Peer.*
Would you have me believe——? Ah, you Troll-witch begone!
(*Thrusts the* Elf *back from him. He hisses angrily, and then crouches again, R.*)

*Green.* You're insulting, Peer Gynt. You are churlish and rude.
(*Weeping.*) If I've lost my good looks, and no longer seem fair
As I was when you lured me on hillside and lee,
(Peer *sits on log L., and hides his face in his hands.*)
Is it my fault or yours? 'Twas you left me alone!
Sent me straight to the devil for help in my need!
Can you wonder I'm withered and ugly and old?
Yet, e'en now, if you'd see me as fair as before,
Turn her out—yonder girl who sits there in the hut—
Drive her far from your thoughts and clean out of your mind.
(*Putting her arms round his neck.*)
(*Kneels.*) Only this, dear, my love! You'll come back to me then.

*Peer.* Oh, I'll split your skull open!
(Elf *shakes his fist at* Peer, *and then crouches again, watching him.*)

*Green* (*rising*). Just try, if you dare!
Oho! I can tell you I've no fear of blows.
I'll return to you, Peer, every day of the year.
Through the door set ajar I'll peep in at you both
When you're there, with your girl, by the cosy fireside.
When you're tender to her, and would pet or caress,
I will seat myself by you, and ask for my share.
For—you promised—and so—we shall take you by turns.
You may wed if you list!

*Peer* (*rising*). Oh! you nightmare of hell!
*Green.* But, of course, you will take your own youngster to rear?
Little Imp! Won't it go to him, then?
*Elf.* Only wait!
I will chop you in bits with my chopper. Ugh! Faugh!
(*Attacks* PEER, *hissing and* * *spitting.*)
(PEER *again thrusts him away.*)
*Green* (* *kissing the* ELF).
What a head he has got on him too! I declare
He'll be quite like his father before very long.
*Peer* (* *stamping*). And to think that this comes——
*Green.* Just from thoughts and desires.
It is hard on you, Peer.
*Peer.* It is harder on *her.*
Ah, my Solveig—my fairest, my purest, my own!
*Green.* 'Tis the guiltless must smart. That is often the way.
'Twas the devil said that when his dam boxed his ears,
Just because his old father had taken to drink!
(* *She trudges off, R. up.*) (*The* ELF *hisses and spits again; throws the flagon after* PEER *and then follows her.*)
*Peer* (* *after a long silence*).
"Roundabout," said the Boyg, "roundabout—roundabout."
My fine palace is down, with a clatter and crash.
There's a wall around her who just now seemed so near.
All is tarnished and ugly—my joy has grown old.
There's no way to be found that will take me right through,
Straight to her, save—that text on repentance, perhaps?—
But I haven't the Book; I've forgotten the way.
And repentance would take—ah! the whole of one's life!
To have shattered what's radiant and lovely and pure,
And to clinch it together in fragments and shards?
It's impossible[1]! No! Where you'd have the sward green
You must learn not to trample.—'Twas naught but a lie.
That witch and her foulness is well out of sight.
(*Goes towards hut and again stops.*)
[Ay, she's out of sight maybe, but not out of mind.

[1] Literally, "You can do it with a fiddle, but not with a bell," a curious metaphor; for of the two instruments the violin is far richer in possibilities. Probably to the Norwegian peasant, as to the Scotsman, the "wee wicked fiddle" is associated chiefly with none too reputable merry-makings, whereas the bell has sacred associations.

Thoughts will follow, still haunting. Still after me, ay!—
Ingrid!—and those others that danced on the heights!
Will they too want to join us, in malice to mock,
With their claim to be folded like her to my heart?—
To be tenderly cherished? Ah, no! Roundabout!—
Roundabout I must go! Though my arms were as long
As the root of the fir or the stem of the pine,
I should hold her too near to the thing that I am,
E'er to set her down, pure and untarnished, again.
Ay, it's roundabout here, and no outlook or hope.
Nothing more! Naught to gain! Well, I'll try not to lose.
One must put such things from one and try to forget.]

(** Goes towards hut, but stops and hesitates.*)

(*A church bell begins to toll slowly far off.*)

Yet, go in after this?—so befouled and bemired!—
Go in with that Troll rabble after me still?
Speak to her, yet be silent! Confess, yet conceal!
It is holy-day even. For me to keep tryst
After this would be sacrilege—*sacrilege*!

*Solveig* (*appearing in doorway of hut*). Peer!
Are you coming?

*Peer* (*half to himself*). Not yet—roundabout.

*Solveig* (*wondering*). What is that?

*Peer.* You must wait. It is dark, and I've something to fetch.

*Solveig.*
Wait! I'm coming. I'll help you. The burden we'll share.

*Peer.* No, dear; stay where you are. I must bear it alone.

*Solveig.* Don't go too far away.

*Peer.* No, be patient, my girl.
Be my way long or short, you must wait.

*Solveig* (** nodding to him as he goes*). Yes. I'll wait.

[*Exit* PEER, *L.*

CURTAIN.

## Scene III.

*Åse's room; evening. The room is lit by a wood-fire on the open hearth. A cat lies on a chair at the foot of the bed.* Åse *lies on the bed, fumbling restlessly with her hands on the coverlet.*

*Åse.* Lord, how long? How long, Lord? Is he coming,
My boy? It's so dreary alone.
And there's no one to send with a message,
And much to be said. Had I known
That our time was so short! Was I never
Too harsh with my laddie—my son?
Maybe *there* lay the sinning! [*Enter* Peer.
*Peer.* Good even!
*Åse.* The Lord give you gladness, dear one!
My own boy! You have come to your mother?
An outlaw, you dare to show face?
You are risking your life in the valley?
*Peer.* My life? Let it go! In my case
It was never worth much. It's a failure.
All hopeless and hollow at heart.
And I *had* to come back to you, mother!
*Åse.* You've come. And in peace I depart.
*Peer.* Depart? Why! what is it you're saying?
You're going away?
*Åse.* It is best.
*Peer* (* *writhing, and going restlessly back*).
And I thought to leave sorrow behind me!
Craved freedom from care!—longed for rest. (*Going towards her.*)
Your hands and your feet—let me feel them!
What makes them so chilly and cold?
*Åse.* It will soon be all over, my laddie.
I'm feeling so frail and so old.
When you see my sight fading to dimness
You'll close my eyes gently? (*With pride.*) What's more,
You will get me a coffin that's costly!
No, no! I'm forgetting. That's o'er.
*Peer.* Hush, mother! Oh! surely there's plenty
Of time for that yet!
*Åse* (* *looking restlessly round the room*). Maybe, Peer;
But—you see just how little they've left us.

'Twas like them! The room is so bare!
*Peer* (* *wincing*). Don't, mother!
(* *Harshly.*) Why need you remind me?
My fault! Don't I know it well, too?
*Åse.* It was only the liquor that brought us
To this. First your father, then you.
Ay, laddie!—you know, you'd been drinking.
You weren't *yourself*, as they say.
(* *Smiling.*) And, besides, you'd been riding the reindeer.
*Peer.* Don't talk of the reindeer to-day.
We must try to forget all our troubles—
All thoughts that bring sorrow and pain.
And just gossip together of trifles,
Till old times return once again.
Here's the very same lazy old pussy
You had when I left. (*Strokes cat.*) Sleeping sound?
*Åse.* She is ailing and wailing o' nights now.
You know what that bodes?
*Peer.* I'll be bound
There is plenty of news in the parish.
*Åse* (* *smiling*). Great news for you. *Somewhere* they say
There's a girl who would fain to the forest!
*Peer* (* *hastily*). And how is Mads Moen to-day?
Contented?
*Åse.* Poor maiden! Her parents
Are pleading against it. Maybe
If you'd look in and see them, you'd help her.
For, Peer, dear!——
*Peer* (*again changing subject*). The smith, how does he?
*Åse.* Aslak Smith? Never talk about Aslak!
But listen, Peer, listen to me!
She is ready to go—must I tell you?
Her name is——
*Peer.* Not now, mother, no!
We'll forget that life's crazy and crooked,
And all that brings sorrow and woe—
And just gossip and chat about trifles.
Bring the past back, and let the rest go.
Come! Stretch yourself out a bit better!
The bed's far too small for you. Ay!

It's the cot that I had as a youngster,
When you sat here—in case I should cry!
You're thirsty? I'll get you some water!
One moment! How many a time
Have you done this for me! Sat beside me,
And taught me some grandmother's rhyme,
While you spread the fur coverlet over!
Or lilted some wonderful lay
About Princes and Trolls and Hobgoblins.
*Åse.* You mind that? and how we would play
When your father was out! We went sledging—
The floor was the ice of the fjord,
And the coverlet here was the apron!
You thought I'd forgotten?
*Peer* (*laughing*). My word!
And the team that we drove!
*Åse.* Kari's kitten,
That sat in the chair for a horse!
*Peer.* And to Soria Moria Castle
We galloped in style; and our course
Lay far east of the sun, by the high-road,
And westward—far west of the moon.
*Åse.* So jaunty I sat on the box-seat,
And drove!
*Peer.* But would ask, very soon,
Was I cold? Did I like it? and so forth.
*Åse.* Ay, these were the times. Ay, alack!
(*The music of "Åse's death" begins very softly.*)
*Peer.* God bless my dear, scolding old mother!
What's hurting you now?
*Åse.* It's my back,
Ever aching; the boards are so chilly
And hard.
*Peer* (*arranging clothing as a pillow*). Is that softer a bit?
*Åse.* No; and, Peer (*restlessly*), it is time I was moving.
*Peer.* What! Moving?
*Åse.* Yes, this is not fit.
I can't stay. (*Trying to rise.*) It is time I was going.
*Peer* (*gently holding her down*).
Nay, dear little mother. Not yet.

You just want to be warm and well rested.
(*Replaces coverlet.*) See then !—I'm beside you. Don't fret !
And I'll stay with you !—tell you a story.
'Twill shorten the time.
*Åse.* No, dear, no !
Far better to bring me the Bible.
(*Laying her hand on her heart.*)
I'm restless here—longing to go.
*Peer.* Hush, listen !—for now in the castle
The King and the Prince give a feast.
I will drive you——
*Åse.* But am I invited ?
*Peer.* Ay, both of us—both !
(*Throws a cord round the chair where the cat lies.*)
Hi !—at least
We can show them all something like driving !
Now Brownie has got away clear.
That's the pace ! You are not feeling colder ?
*Åse.* But what is that ringing I hear ?
*Peer.* Why, the sledge bells !
*Åse.* No, hollow it's rolling !
I'm frightened, Peer !
*Peer.* Hush, mother dear !
We are driving——
*Åse.* But what is that rushing
And sighing ? So strange is the sound ! (*Trying to rise.*)
*Peer.* It is only the sough of the pine-trees.
We're out in the forest around.
*Åse.* There's a sparkling and gleaming afar now !
Whence comes all the beautiful light ?
*Peer.* From the castle—its windows and doorway.
They're dancing—you hear ?
*Åse.* Yes, I hear them.
*Peer.* [They'll welcome you, mother, to-night !
There's St Peter himself at the gateway.
He'll take you in straight, never fear !
*Åse.* Will he greet us ?
*Peer.* Of course ! Do the honours,
And pour out the wine, bright and clear ;
*That* will give you new strength !

*Åse.* Are there cakes too?
*Peer.* Ay! heaps of them—all heart can wish!
And the Provost's wife's there, making ready
The coffee,—and fruits! Such a dish!
*Åse.* Shall I meet her again?
*Peer.* Ay! for certain!
*Åse.* How joyful 'twill be—and how bright!
Lord, Lord!
*Peer* (* *cracking his whip*).
Up! Come up with you, Brownie!]
*Åse* (*raising herself*). My dear!—are you driving aright?
*Peer.* Ay! for broad is the way!
*Åse.* But the journey
Is long, and I'm wearied and done.
I will close my eyes now, for I trust you.
*Peer.* Woa, Brownie! That race was well run!
Here's the castle, and there stands St Peter!
Just see how the guests throng around!
They've not seen so good an old mother
As mine, for a while, I'll be bound.
Let her in, and I'll go back without her;—
Just stop at the gate, and draw rein.
[If you'd spare me a drop of your liquor,
To hearten me, first, I'd be fain!—
But if not, it's all one. I'll content me
As best as I may here, outside;
For, you see, I'm not ready to enter.
I've bragged and I've prated and lied
Like the devil and all! And my mother!—
(*Penitently.*) I've called her a silly old hen—
Said she made such a fuss about nothing,
And cackled and clucked! But what then?]
She'll be safe now, at home in the castle,
And honoured; ne'er fretted again.
Not a soul ever lived that could beat her
For miles all around, far and wide!
Ah!—a Voice rings out, "What's this, St Peter?
Delay at the gate? Stand aside!
No more airs! Let old Åse pass freely."
The Father has welcomed her, see!

(* *Laughing aloud, and turning to his* MOTHER.)
And they dance to a different measure!
I told you, dear, how it would be.
(*Coming out of his state of exaltation and back to reality, and looking at her * anxiously.*)
Why, your eyes are all dim! Don't you see me?
(*Goes to the head of the bed.*)
I can't bear to have you lie there
Looking strange and unwitting. Speak, mother!
You know me? You know your boy, Peer?
(* *Feels her forehead and hands carefully.*)
Can't you hear what I say any longer?
I'm here at your side.—It's all o'er.
(* *Throws the cord on the chair, saying softly:*)
You may rest yourself now, good old Brownie!
The journey is ended once more.
(* *Closes her eyes and bends over her.*)
For all of the days of your tending
I thank you. For tenderest care,
Ay!—and thrashings! Now thank me back, mother.
The driver has need of his fare.
(* *He presses his cheek against her lips.*)
(*Enter* KARI, *L., carrying faggots in her apron. She crosses R. without seeing him, lays down wood and then turns.*)
*Kari* (* *entering*).
What, Peer! Is that you? Then we're over
The worst of it now! Has she said
How she wanted you—wearied with longing?
(*Approaching bed a little anxiously.*)
How soundly she's sleeping!
*Peer* (*signalling silence*). She's dead.
(* KARI *weeps beside the body;* PEER GYNT *walks up and down for some time; at last he stops beside the bed.*)
You will see mother buried with honour?

For I must be gone -- o'er the Sea.
You're going so far?
Ay and further;
Out Westward -- as far as may be!

Curtain

NOTE.—*The cuts suggested in the above scene make it about the same length as the original, which has shorter lines. It is impossible to give the value of the Norse in language as terse and compressed. If the scene is given entire, the music will have to be taken very slowly, otherwise it will finish too soon; and it must begin in time to precede* ÅSE'S *questions about the sounds she hears. The fortissimo passage should coincide with her cry that she is frightened, and the reference to the beautiful light she sees has also its correspondence in the music.*

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## ACT IV.

In this edition the whole of this fourth act—which was an afterthought of the poet, and does not belong to his original conception of the play—is omitted. It deals with PEER GYNT'S travels in Egypt,[1] with which are connected the well-known music of Anitra's dance, the Arab dance, and other portions of Grieg's suite. The only scene in the whole act which has a Northern setting is the one given below. It is introduced just when PEER has resolved to abandon the pleasures of the senses and strive after intellectual development. Mystically, this symbolises his entrance on the *Path of Wisdom*, as the building of the hut suggested his resolute entrance on the *Path of Action*. Both stages are followed immediately by the vision of SOLVEIG, the higher self; but the third path, the *Path of Devotion*, which is only reached through the gate of humility, must be trodden before permanent union is achieved; and this vision, though full of hope and promise, is only a fleeting one.

* *A summer day, far up in the North. A hut in the forest. The door, to which is attached a large wooden bar, stands open. There are reindeer horns above it. A flock of goats feeds by the wall of the hut. A middle-aged woman, fair-haired and comely, sits spinning outside in the sunshine.*

(SOLVEIG *spins, singing her Song of Faith,* * *and looking away down the road.*)

[1] Egypt is always the symbol of the material plane,—the land of the worship of the golden calf. It is here Peer grows weary of wealth, and, desiring it no longer, loses it.

Autumn and winter and spring may pass away,
May pass and die away.
Fair summer follow and fall to winter gray,
Again to winter gray.
Thou wilt come again, and our troth wilt renew,
I await thee here, ever faithful and true.
(* *She calls the goats, spins, and sings again.*)
God give thee grace, joy, and gladness by the way,
His gladness by the way.
Comfort in sorrow and guidance when astray,
His guidance when astray.
Maybe we shall meet, up on high by his throne,
Or, if it be here, thou shalt find me, my own.

CURTAIN.

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## ACT V.

### SCENE I.

* *A hill-side seamed by the dry bed of a torrent. A ruined mill-house beside the stream. The ground is torn up, and the whole place waste. Further up the hill, a large farm-house, in front of which an auction is going on. There is a large gathering of people, who are drinking noisily.* PEER GYNT *is sitting on a heap of rubbish, beside the mill. He is now a very old man.*

(*If it is impossible, owing to lack of space, to stage the auction effectively,* PEER *should be discovered alone, and the others enter as if coming from an auction, the noise of the dispersing crowd being heard in the distance.*)

*Peer.* I go forward or back, and it's just as far;
Outside or in, it's as cramped and as strait.
"Roundabout," said the Boyg, and though time wears away,
It is roundabout still and no help for it yet.

[*Enter* ASLAK *and* MADS, *arm in arm, R.* ASLAK *in deep mourning,* MADS *in grey.*

*Aslak.* The whole place is sold up. Only rubbish is left.

*Mads.* Yes, the auction is o'er.

*Aslak* (* *catching sight of* PEER). What! are strangers here too? (*To Peer.*) Good e'en to you, friend. (*A laugh heard off R.*)

*Peer* (*pointing R.*). You've had lively times here.
Who's been christened or married? What sort of a show?

(*Voices approaching. A small group of lads and girls enters R., pulling and tugging at an old coat, carried by one of them.*)

*Aslak.* A house-warming rare!—For the bride has been laid
In a strange bridal bed—with the worms for a groom.
(*The coat is torn in two. Another laugh.*)

*Peer.* And these other worms here, are they squabbling for rags?

*Aslak.* Well, what would you have? It's the end of the song.

*Peer.* All the songs end alike. I have sung them myself,
As a boy; they are always the same, old and stale.

1*st Man* (*entering R., with a casting ladle*).
Just look what I've bought! It's a ladle for lead
Or for silver. Peer Gynt cast his buttons with this.

1*st Lad.* Here's the bushel once filled with his grandfather's gold.
Just a halfpenny.

2*nd Lad.* What? I paid twopence for this.
(*Holds up a pedlar's pack*, 1ST MAN *examines it, and Exit, R.*)

*Peer.* Who is he that you speak of? Peer Gynt, did you say?

*Aslak.* Why, I hardly can tell. He was kinsman to her—
That's the woman that's dead [1]—and to Aslak the Smith.
(*Indicating himself.*)

*Mads Moen.*
You are leaving me out. You've been drinking again!

*Aslak.* Much chance of my drinking. Your memory's gone!
There's a door to the storehouse at Hegstad. It locks.

*Mads Moen.*
Yes; I know well enough! Much *you* cared about that.
You were easily pleased.

*Aslak.* If she only *stays* dead! (*Both chuckle.*)

*Mads Moen* (*taking out a flask*).
Come, kinsman!—a dram! For the sake of old times.
(1ST MAN *re-enters, laden with goods.*)

*Aslak.*
To the deuce with your kinship! You're maundering now.

*Mads Moen.*
Not at all! Blood is thicker than water, you know;
Surely none can deny we're akin to Peer Gynt. (*Chuckles.*)

*Peer.* Well! one meets with acquaintances!

4*th Lad* (*calling after* ASLAK). [Mother that's dead

[1] This is the interpretation of the line adopted by Count Prozor. Mr Archer reads "kinsman to Death."

Will be after you, Aslak, if you take a dram,
So you'd better be careful now!

*1st Lad* (** with the skin of a bear*). Hi! look at this!
Here's the skin of the cat[1] helped Peer Gynt to hunt Trolls.

*2nd Lad* (** with the skull of a reindeer*).
And the horns of the wonderful reindeer he rode——

*1st Man* (** with a hammer*).
Here's a sledge-hammer, Aslak! Perhaps it was this
That you used when the devil cleft holes in the wall.

*3rd Lad* (*going C., * empty handed*).
And, Mads Moen! behold the invisible cloak
In which Peer Gynt and Ingrid flew off through the air!

(*Much laughter.*)

*Peer.* Here, you!—brandy for me, boys! I feel I've grown old.

(3RD LAD *offers his flask.*)

It is time for my auction, so here goes my stuff!

*1st Lad.* What have you to sell, then?

*Peer.* A palace comes first.
Low it lies, in the Rondë—and solidly built.

*2nd Lad.* Here!—a button is bid!

*Peer.* You must run to a dram.
'Twere a sin and a shame to bid anything less.

*3rd Lad.* He's a jolly old boy this!

(** The bystanders crowd round him.*)

*Peer.* Now, Brownie, my horse!

*Aslak.* Where's he running?

*Peer.* Why, westward—far into the west.
Near the sunset, my lads!—and not Peer Gynt himself
Could tell lies half as fast as that courser can fly.

*1st, 2nd, and 3rd Lads and Girls.* And what else have you got?

*Peer.* I've both rubbish and gold.
I bought it with ruin!—I'll sell at a loss.

*2nd Lad.* Put it up!

*Peer.* First, a dream of a silver-clasped book.
A psalm book!

(*A contemptuous laugh.*)

It goes for an old hook and eye.

[1] A reference to one of the old Peer Gynt stories in which our hero obtained the help of a bear in clearing a house of Trolls.

*2nd Lad.* To the devil with dreams!
*Peer.* Here's my kingdom comes next.
You may scramble for it. (*Throws it. Laughter. Enter Bailiff.*)
*2nd Lad.* Is the crown given in?
*Peer.* Ay! a fine one—of straw; and, whoe'er puts it on,
Will find it just fits him. And more—always more.
An egg that is addled—a madman's grey hair
And the beard of a prophet! All these shall be his
Who can show me the guide post, set high on the hill,
Which says, "Here lies your path."
*Bailiff.* My good man, have a care.
Or your path will lead you to the gaol or (*tapping his forehead*) elsewhere.
*Peer* (*hat in hand*).
I daresay. But just tell me *Who was he*—Peer Gynt?
*Bailiff.* This is nonsense!
*Peer.* Excuse me!—Most humbly, I beg.
*Bailiff.* He is said to have been an outrageous young liar.
*Peer.* A liar?
*Bailiff.* Yes; all the great deeds that were done
He had done them himself—that's according to him.
You'll excuse me, my friend. I have duties elsewhere. [*Exit R.*
*Peer.* And where is he now, this remarkable man?
1*st Man.* Why, he passed over seas, to some far foreign land,
And went all to the bad, as you'll readily guess.
So—they hanged him. (*Turns away.*)
*Peer.* Hanged Peer? Ay, I fancied they would.
Our lamented Peer Gynt was himself to the last.
(*Bowing.*) Well! good-bye, and best thanks. It's so pleasant to meet.
1*st Lad.* Won't you join us again?
*Peer.* Ay, right willingly too.
And I'll pay you my shot, with a traveller's [1] tale.
1*st, 2nd, and 3rd Lads* } *and others.* [Do you know any?
1*st, 2nd, and 3rd Girls* }
*Peer* (* *coming nearer, and with a curious expression*).
Rather! Here!—all you young lads!—

[1] If the cut suggested here is adopted, the crowd must begin to pass out R. a few lines before this, the last lad who speaks remaining to the end, and going as soon as Peer has answered him.

And you bonnie young lassies too!—Listen to me!
Once, a long time ago—I was gold-digging then,
Out in 'Frisco—some mountebanks came to the town.
Quite a lot of them!—one that could play with his toes
On the fiddle; another, who danced, on his knees,
Spanish jigs of some kind; while a third, I was told,
Could make rhymes while a hole was bored into his brain!
And a meeting was held, for the whole of the crew
To compete, with their cantrips. And who do you think
But the devil himself came, to try his luck there?
He boasted to all he could grunt like a pig—
Just exactly like one!—and you'll readily guess—
Although nobody knew 'twas the devil himself—
That his person and programme attracted the crowd.
Yes! the house was crammed full—not a seat to be had.
And all eager—expectant—they came to the show.
Well, he stepped forth, half hid by a long flowing cloak,
Held with care, for beneath it he'd smuggled a pig!
For "Man muss sich drappiren," as Germans would say.
And he started by bowing; then took a good grip
Of the creature; and promptly poor piggy began
A fantasia, finely composed in a key
That could fairly express all the woes that are felt
Both in fetters and free—in the life of a hog!
It all ended in style with a slaughter-house squeal
You could hear a mile off;—and Old Nick made his bow.
Then the critics began to discuss the affair,
And attacked or defended the tone of the piece.
There were those who had fancied the voice was too thin—
Not expressive enough!—and the death-shriek itself
Too conventional—*studied*! But all were agreed,
When it came to the grunt, so bepraised in the bills,
That 'twas simply ridiculous—quite overdone.
For the devil had stupidly left out of count
The great need that performers—and orators too—
Have to gauge *what their public is fit for.* Good-bye!
(* *He bows, and goes off. A puzzled silence comes over the crowd.*)

NOTE.—*The above scene is perhaps the most difficult to follow of all the many obscure scenes in this curious drama, and intentionally*

*so; for in the original the author does not even name the characters till half way through, and describes* Aslak *and* Mads *simply as "a man in mourning" and "a man in grey." Possibly* Ibsen *wanted his readers to feel something of the misty, half-groping sensations of a very old man re-visiting the scenes of his youth, and unable to recognise at first the men who were the intimate companions of his early years. We gather by degrees that* Ingrid *has just died, and can recognise something pathetic in the fact that during her life-time she has left the old farmhouse in which her faithless lover had lived, just as it was when it passed into her own hands on* Åse's *death,* i.e. *without even disturbing what was left of the furniture.* Aslak's *deep mourning, and fervent hope that the dead woman won't come to life again, proclaim him as having been her henpecked husband; and* Mads *is apparently jubilant, in a senile way, over the fate he had escaped; but who is the lad*[1] *who speaks of* Ingrid *as "Mother that's dead," and yet does not address* Aslak *as "Father"? Is it "the ugly elf," who* has *taken physical shape after all, in spite of* Åse's *assertion that* Ingrid *came home "none the worse"? The point is left so vague that it is better not to bewilder the audience by this apparent contradiction, and his remark is easily cut. The story of the devil and the pig is also intrusive from the stage-manager's point of view. The audience has already seen* Peer *twice in his capacity of yarn-spinner, and may be left to guess that his stories have become less entertaining as the years slipped by. This particular yarn, too, has nothing to do with the drama. It belongs to the same category of interpolations as Hamlet's homily to the players on the art of acting, but is neither so interesting nor so well placed. The* Prince of Denmark *speaks as a patron of the fine arts.* Peer, *apparently, speaks here—quite out of character—as a rather embittered dramatist who has seen his own work, of a realistic type, neglected in favour of unwholesome, exaggerated, and unnatural studies, dealing with the lives of sensualists in the throes of temptation;* i.e. *of pigs, pinched by the devil. The whole incident should be cut and the scene run straight on into* Peer's *onion soliloquy. In a small theatre it will probably be necessary to play the auction dialogue as a front scene—same setting as Act I., Scene I.—in order to have* Solveig's *hut ready*

[1] Peer has been absent too long for such a theory. The point is hopelessly obscure.

*behind. Hence the supplementary stage directions as to entrances and exits.*

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### Scene II.

*Whitsun Eve. In the depth of the forest. At the back, in a clearing, is a hut with a pair of reindeer's horns over the porch-gable.* Peer Gynt *is creeping among the undergrowth, gathering wild onions.*

*Peer.* This is one point of view. What, I wonder, comes next?
"Prove all things," we are told; "hold fast that which is good."
Well, I've proved them, so far, going backwards from Cæsar
Right through the old story to Nebuchadnezzar.
I've come "back to the land"—the old mother—once more.
"Dust thou art," so it runs, and "to dust shalt return."
The main thing, after all, is to eat and to sleep,
Fill one's belly—but how? With wild onions? Heigho!
I must set a few snares. I can drink from the spring,
And so live out my days as a king among beasts.
[And after a bit, when my time comes to die—
And it will come some day!—I shall crawl as I can
Into shelter behind some great trunk that lies prone,
Gather leaves all around me, like Bruin, when old,
And then carve my own name in big letters above
On the bark, "Here lies Peer"—ay, Peer Gynt, decent soul!
"Who was king o' the beasts in the country around."]
(* *Laughs to himself.*)
I a king? Come!—no play-acting now, my good friend!
No great monarch are you—a mere onion, that's all.
And you cannot escape—though you beg and lament!—
It is high time for stripping off every disguise.
(* *Takes up an onion, and begins to strip off one layer after another.*)
There's the outermost layer—all ragged and torn.
That's the exile, returned after shipwreck and loss.
Then the popular passenger—elderly, thin,
With a flavour about him that smacks of Peer Gynt.
Next the gold-digger ego—it's juice is all gone!
And the Hudson's Bay hunter—as tough as his hides.
This one looks like a crown—'twas of tinsel, not gold.

We'll throw that to the devil, who gave it! And now
Comes the student, in Egypt, of antique remains;
Then the prophet who posed—ugh! the horrible smell!
It brings tears to one's eyes!—And this fat layer here
Is the Crœsus, the millionaire, living in style.
But the next one seems sick—that's with trading in slaves!
It's all blackened and streaked. There's no kernel behind,
Only layers and layers—naught left in the end.

(* *Throws the fragments away.*)

[Mother nature is witty, and loves to play tricks!
But the devil take brooding!—To think of it all
Only makes a man stumble.—No danger of that
Just at present, though! Here I'm firm set on all fours.

(* *Scratches his head.*)

I'll dismiss the whole business—it's too much for me.]
Life just plays with us here; holds out baubles and toys
Which we snatch at, and grip something else in their stead.
Ay!—or nothing at all!

(* *He has come near the hut, and now catches sight of it and starts.*)

NOTE.—*If this scene is played straight on after the preceding one, the hut must only be disclosed now, and the light in it should shine softly out as* SOLVEIG *begins to sing.*

Why!—what is it?—what's here?
That's the sheiling I knew, in the days long ago!
[Yes!—the hut on the heath, with the horns of the deer
Jutting out!—and a mermaiden carved up above!

(* *Rubbing his eyes.*)

It's all nonsense and stuff!—There's no mermaid!—but just]
Rusty nails, and rough planks, and the bar that I placed
To shut out goblin thoughts. Am I dreaming again?

SOLVEIG *sings softly in the hut to the same melody as before.*

Whitsuntide even! All's ready for my joy—
All is ready for my joy.
Far away wandering fares the weary boy;—
So weary is my boy.
Art thou heavy laden?—yet patience, my dear!
Ah, patience, my dear!
I await thee still, at the close of the year—
The close of the year.

*Peer.* There is one who remembers; and one who forgot;
A soul that has squandered; and one that has saved.
Heart's bitterness ever! The chance that was lost!
That can never return! My true kingdom lay there!
(* *Hurries off along the woodland path.*)

NOTE.—*This is the close of* PEER'S *life on the physical plane, and an ordinary exit hardly conveys the idea to the audience. It is only the soul of him that "hurries off" and continues to pass on from stage to stage in the passage from life to life through death. Therefore his body should be left lying in front of the hut.*

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## EPILOGUE.

### SCENE I. TRANSITION.

*Night. A heath with fir trees. A forest fire has been raging, and charred tree-trunks are seen stretching away in the distance, for miles. White mists are clinging to the earth here and there.* PEER GYNT *comes running over the heath.*

*Peer.* The wind, moaning still, blows up ashes and dust,
Drives the smoke and the mist and the cloud;
And the temple it built hides the worm and the rust—
Is a sepulchre—white, like a shroud!
Upon dreams that were false its foundations were laid,
Yet the pyramid reaches the skies.
And the steps of the staircase the climber has made
Are all built on delusions and lies.
At the summit above flaunts the pennon on high,
That he wove of the evil he wrought,
All adorned with a heart's true repentance, thrust by
And choked back for some chance passing thought. (* *Listens.*)
What is this?—Children's voices that wistfully sigh
Half in tears—and half chanting a lay?
They are tangled [1] skeins, rolling together, that lie
On the pathway to trip me. Away! (* *Kicks at them.*)
*Tangled Skeins.*
All the fast-coming thoughts that you strangled at birth
Lie around you. Your children are we.

[1] Literally "thread balls." A reference to a popular fairy-tale familiar to Norsemen.

Had you given us feet, we had run.
*Peer.* On the earth,
I gave life to but one. Where is he?
He was crooked and ugly and fearsome.
*Tangled Skeins.* Alas!
Had we wings we might soar to the heights,
Raise our voices on high! But instead, we must pass
Dreary days and the long dismal nights,
Tangled skeins, rolled together, in darkness and mist.
*Peer.* Roll for ever, then! Curse on you all!
Would you trip your own father? (* *Stumbling.*)
*Withered Leaves flying before the wind.*
Oh, listen!—ay list!
To the faded leaves round you, that fall!
For, alas! we are blighted and withered and dead,
Killed by cankerworms, long ere our time.
Had you gathered us, fair leafy garlands instead,
We had wreathed round the fruits of your prime.
For a watchword were we, to proclaim to the world,
You have failed in your task.
*Peer.* Hush! No more!
May you rot as you lie, where the tempest has whirled
Your bare carcases! Add to the store
And enrich the old soil of the forest.
*A Sighing in the Air.* Again!
You must hearken! For snatches of song
That have waited unsung—dumb—in sorrow and pain,
In the depth of your heart all along,
Are now wailing and sighing. In vain, stifled back,
We have striven to utter our note,
And the music you never gave voice to—alack!
To rank poison has turned in your throat.
*Peer.* To poison? What folly! What leisure had I
To play poet or singer, I pray? (* *Attempts a short cut.*)
*Dew-drops.* Look up! For the dew from the branches on high
Is down-dripping and dropping to-day.
We are tears, never shed! Had you once let us flow
We had melted the icy cold spear,
Whose barb pierced the heart that was heavy with woe
In the days that were empty and drear.

And the heart never healed. Though the wound was closed o'er
It rankles, and gives you no rest.
Now, our kingdom is ended; no tears, any more,
Can give comfort.
*Peer.* I howled with the best,
In the realm of the Rondë. What good did it do?
Was the torment there lessened for me
When they tore off my tail?
*Broken Straws.* Woe, alas!—woe to you!
Ever faithless and scoffing! For we
Are the deeds left undone, actions all incomplete,
That will rise on the great judgment day,
And bear witness against you. Ay! ever repeat
The same story, that haunts the whole way
You have trod. Lack of faith—deadly doubting—has set
Its dark seal on your life at the last.
*Peer.* These are tricks to affright. You would dare make a debt
Of what never was done in the past? (* *Hastens away.*)
*Åse's Voice* (* *far away*).
In the slush and the mire I have fallen and lie,
Overturned and besmirched. Peer, alas!
Where's the castle? You've missed the road somehow, and I
Have been driven all wrong! What a pass
Have you come to at length! For the devil himself
Has misled you, the whole journey through.
'Twas the wrong whip he gave you—that lay on the shelf
In the cupboard at home.
*Peer.* Mother, too?
Then it's time I were gone. I have sins of my own!
Need the devil add his to the score?
I must fall 'neath the load, if I bear it alone—
Faint and fall!—to arise nevermore!

(* *Hurries off along the forest path.*)

Curtain.

Note.—*The above scene probably suffers more through translation than any in the book, partly from its inherent difficulty, for many of the thoughts, fully set down above, are merely suggested or implied in the short terse lines of the original; and such a type of treatment, which demands a higher degree of poetic skill*

*than is likely to be found in the average translator, is infinitely better suited to the very unusual subject of the scene than the fuller phrasing, made necessary in the case of the ordinary versifier, by the comparative scarcity of English rhymes. If it is hard to render the scene on paper at all, it will probably be found still harder to produce it on the stage; and most managers will do wisely to leave it alone, though its fitting presentation has perhaps become a shade less impossible since the recent interesting revival of interpretive movement introduced by certain American dancers. Surely the recitation throughout should be accompanied by soft music? and if so, no music could be more suitable than a repetition of Grieg's beautiful "Death of Åse," which would thus become the* dying *motif of the play, and bring home to the audience the fact that the "wind" of the opening lines in this scene is really the restless spirit trying to free itself from the trammels of the flesh; the same spirit which, through its craving for physical incarnation, originally built the "pyramid" or temple of the body that clothed it during its earthly pilgrimage; and which now, wearied out by the stress and strain of physical action, longs for the rest and freedom of the realms above, turning from material things as transitory and illusive, and viewing the whole physical plane as a forest laid waste by fire. The introduction of withered leaves and broken straws, and, above all, of dewdrops, into a forest devastated by fire, is calculated to afflict the English reader's imagination not a little as eminently un-Shakespearian; but possibly* Ibsen *deliberately chose a setting which jars with our knowledge of the physical plane, just because it was perplexing and impossible, and therefore more suggestive of the confused and contradictory impressions we occasionally get of the astral plane through psychic dreams and visions.*

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### Scene II.

*Another part of the heath.* Peer Gynt *sits back, L.C., arranging a black band round a shabby old hat.*

*Peer* (** singing*). Grave-diggers haste ye, and sextons abound.
Chant eerie music, roll it around.
On with the mourning, black, white, and grey,
I've many a dead man to bury to-day!

(*Rises as he sings the last line, and walks briskly R.C. Enter R. the* MOULDER OF BUTTONS, *carrying tools and casting-ladle.*)

*Moulder.* Good e'en to you, gaffer! Well met!

*Peer* (*passing him without stopping*).

Ay, good evening, friend!

*Moulder.* You're in haste to be gone. You are bound for——?

*Peer.* A funeral feast.

*Moulder* (*noting his hat-band*).

So I see, now I'm nearer. But first—you'll excuse me, I hope,
Will you tell me your name? Does it happen by chance to be Peer?

*Peer.* Ay, Peer Gynt, so they tell me.

*Moulder.* Exceedingly fortunate that!
It's precisely Peer Gynt and no other I'm sent for to-night.

*Peer.* You're sent for? Why, what do you want?

*Moulder* (*showing tools*). Pray, examine my tools.
The casting and moulding of metal for buttons and such
Is my work; and my ladle is ready, ay!—ready for *you.*

*Peer.* What on earth do you mean?

*Moulder.* It is time you were melted.

*Peer.* What! *me*?

*Moulder.*

Yes, of course. Here's the ladle, well polished and empty and clean.
Your coffin's bespoke, my good friend, and your grave ready dug.
Your body has served out its time and must fall to decay,
And I've orders—strict orders—from Master, to bring in your soul.

*Peer.* It can't be! Not like this—without warning.

*Moulder.* Tradition—and use!
The time for the christening feast and for burial too,
Is in silence and secrecy set. There's no warning at all
To the guest of the hour.

*Peer.* Yes, I know; that is true, in a way;
But—my brain's in a whirl!—why, you must be——?

*Moulder.* The Moulder, I said.

*Peer.* A Moulder of Buttons?—A pet child has many a name.
It's the harbour at last! That's the thought that Peer Gynt has to face.
Ay, the end of the trip. But it seems to me still, my good man,
That there's something unfair and unkind! I am sure I deserve
Better treatment than this. I'm not nearly so bad as you think.
I've done more or less good in the world. At the most and the worst

You may say I'm a bungler—that's all. Not a sinner in gross.
*Moulder.*
That's precisely the trouble, my man. You're no sinner [1] at all.
Had you sinned, you should suffer!—progress through your torturing pangs.
But you've shirked, and are not worth the fire! Just the ladle for you.
. . . . . .
*Peer* (*crossing L.C.*). No; avaunt! . . .
. . . This is new-fangled stuff, and the doctrine's not sound.
You've imported it—made it all up—while I travelled abroad.
*Moulder.* It's as old as the serpent of Eden, and rightly designed
For prevention of waste. You must know, for you've worked at the craft,
How at times there's a casting that fails; say, a button that lacks
And is useless—no loop! When that happened, what was it you did?
*Peer.* Flung the rubbish away!
*Moulder.* Ay, I daresay you would, for a Gynt
Would be ever a waster; the breed is well known—sire and son.
But the Master wastes nothing. There's nothing that's worthless to Him.
That is why His great business prospers. And you, Peer, you too,
Were designed to adorn this, His garment. Your loop has given way.
Raw material still, for re-casting—nor button, nor ore!
So the waste-box—the ladle—is ready. We'll try you again.
You'll be merged in the mass.
*Peer.* You don't mean me to melt and dissolve?
To confound me with Tom, Dick, and Hal, and the rest of the crew?
Make me over again? Why, absurd!
*Moulder.* That is just what I mean.
It's our custom. We've done it already to plenty of folks.
When a coin has been current so long it's defaced and worn-out,
Then they mint it afresh, do they not, with the stamp of the King?
*Peer* (*contemptuously, crossing R.*).
Talk of thrift! This is miserly, beggarly!—Let me go free!
What's a button that's lacking a loop, or a coin that is worn
To your Master? He's rich, is He not?
*Moulder.* You've a value for Him!

[1] The Moulder's idea of sin seems to be confined to conscious and deliberate sin. Peer Gynt has all along believed he was doing the best and wisest thing for his own salvation and evolution.

For as long as the spirit is in you you're metal and worth;
Just so much as material; raw, but——
*Peer* (*crossing L.*). With teeth and with claws
If it need be I'll fight against this. I'll do anything else—
[But not this! *Never* this!
*Moulder.* For what else do you think you are fit?
The Heaven's too high——
*Peer.* Yes, I know it. I don't aim so far—
I'm not airy enough—nor so very ambitious. Content
To stay here, or to go; but I won't be deprived of *myself.*
Not one jot! Have me judged by the law in the old-fashioned way!
For a time, if you choose, send me down to my lord of the hoof—
Say a century, now, at the most, if the judge is severe—
They tell me the torment is "moral," I'll bear that and grin.
. . . . . .
But this other idea!—to have to be melted and merged!]
To be Peer Gynt no more! Lose myself? It's a horrible thought.
(*Sits on log, L.*)
*Moulder.*
My dear Peer, there is surely no need to excite yourself thus.
What a trifle it is! Lose yourself? It's impossible, quite,
For you never have found that same self, in so far as I know!
Then what does it matter? You lose what you never have had.
*Peer.*
Never had? Never been? what, *myself*? I could very near laugh!
Peer Gynt has been somebody else? No, you judge in the dark,
You old Moulder of Buttons! If you could see here, ay, right through
To the heart of me, down to the reins, you would only find Peer,
Always Peer! Nothing less, I assure you, nor anything more.
*Moulder.*
This is useless, for here are my orders. Look! written out clear,
Unmistakable. "Summon Peer Gynt. He has spoilt the design
Of his life. You must cast him again."
*Peer.* It's incredible! Come!
He means somebody else. It's not Peer. It is Rasmus or John——
*Moulder.*
I have melted them down long ago. Come! The time runs to waste!
So come quickly!
*Peer.* I'm damned if I do! What's your hurry to-day?
You may find on the morrow you've made a mistake! and what then?

*Moulder.* But I have it in writing.
*Peer.* For any sake let me have time!
*Moulder.* Why, what good would it do?
*Peer.* I can prove that you wrong me. I'll show
I was always myself, all the days of my life. That's the point
In dispute.
*Moulder.* And you'll prove it? And, pray, how is that to be done?
*Peer.* Why, by vouchers and witnesses.
*Moulder.* Such as the Master accepts?
I'm afraid He'll refuse.
*Peer.* But He can't. And besides, if He does,
Why sup sorrow beforehand? Sufficient the woe for the day!
You'll allow me a loan of myself? I will meet you again
With my proofs; but, you see, since a man's never born more than once,
He clings fast to the self that he knows, as is natural, too.
Now—I trust we're agreed, my good man?
*Moulder.* I consent to delay—
No more shirking, remember! We meet at the crossroads beyond.
(* Peer *runs off.*)

(*Lights change to "Troll" lights.*)

Note.—Ibsen's *direction here is "A further point on the heath," and* Peer *enters, "running hard," a further hint of the rapid progress of the soul through the sub-planes of the psychic realm. In actual representation it is better not to relax the attention of the audience oftener than is necessary, especially towards the end of a play, and in consequence the scenes should be run together as much as possible. Hence the* Moulder *should go out R., leaving* Peer, *and the old* Dovrë King's *dialogue with the latter follow straight on without change of setting.*

*Peer.* Time is money, they say, in the scripture;
If only I knew where to go!
The forest is wide. I may wander
And eagerly seek, to and fro,
Yet never once chance on a witness—
On someone who knew me of yore,
And will vouch for me.
(*Enter* Troll-King, *L.*, * *bent with age; a staff in his hand and a bag on his back.*)

*King.* Spare me a trifle,
Kind sir, I am homeless and poor.
*Peer.* No small change in my pocket.
*King.* Excuse me!
It can't be—we meet once again?
Prince Peer, as I live!
*Peer.* What! You know me?
*King.* Of course I do, Peer!
*Peer.* And who, then,
In the name of the devil, are you, sir?
*King.* Ah, surely you haven't forgot
The old man in the hill of the Rondë.
*Peer.* You don't mean to say!—why, it's not
The old Dovrë king?
*King.* That is my name—style
And title at least; but you see
I've come down in the world since I met you.
*Peer.* What! Ruined?
*King.* About it! Ay me! (*Crossing R.*)
But it's hard at my age to be tramping.
I'm famished and lean [too!
*Peer* (*aside*). Hooray!
Such a witness is more than I hoped for.
*King.* You've changed a good deal;—growing grey?
*Peer.* Why, the years, as they pass, leave their traces.
Let bygones be bygones!—Look here!
We'll just bury the past. If we quarrelled
It's over and done with.
*King.* Dear, dear!
To be sure, my lord Prince. And, your Highness,
You really were far better freed
From that bargain you struck in the Rondë,
'Twas wisdom on your part.
*Peer.* Indeed?
*King.* You have saved yourself many a sorrow.
The girl that you chose as your wife
Went down-hill apace, I can tell you!
And has led a deplorable life!
Only think!—She accepted as suitor
A scamp of a Troll——

*Peer.* Who?
*King.* The Trond
Of the Valfjeld.
*Peer.* Ha, ha! I remember!
I cut him out once, up beyond
An old farm, on the mountains. The girls there
Were after him, but—— (*Chuckles.*)
*King.* I daresay.
You were popular then; and my grandson—
You met him once!—has the same way
Of endearing himself. His descendants
Are swarming all over the place.
But they don't care a straw for their elders!
A cold-blooded kindred!—A race
That is always prolific in evil,
Yet flourishes—grows——
*Peer.* Very sad—
But you'll spare me the rest of the story.
Look here, now! The fact is, I'm glad
We have met; for I want you to help me.
*King.* Then certainly you will repay
Any trifling assistance I give you?
*Peer.* With pleasure.
*King.* Then how——
*Peer.* Why, to-day
I am greatly in need of a witness
Who'll vouch for me. Kindly recall
To your mind, for the moment, what happened
The night that I came to your hall.
I was then a sad madcap——
*King* (*chuckling*). That's certain.
But there, there! His Highness was young.
*Peer.* Yes; enough of his Highness at present!
The point is, that after they'd sung
Or made music of some kind, you wanted
To bias my sight—make me squint—
And become a Hill-Troll—yours entirely.
And I, at the very first hint
Of such doings, refused, plump and plain, sir—
Renounced love and kingdom and pelf,

Giving up every chance of promotion,
Insisting on being "Myself."
Now, you'll swear to these facts in the court-room?
*King.* I'm blest if I can!
*Peer.* But indeed——
*King.* Me to perjure myself? Very likely!
You took my tail, tasted the mead!
*Peer.* Just at first, I admit, you seduced me
With promises fair; but at last
(*Going impatiently R.*)
It's the end of the story that matters.
*King* (*following him*).
Exactly, sir. Don't go too fast.
Listen! What was the end, can you tell me?
*Peer.* I duly renounced——
*King.* I daresay
You renounced us in *words*; but the story
Has ended the opposite way.
*Peer.* This is nonsense!
*King.* When you left the Rondë,
Our motto was writ on your heart—
Was engraved on your shield.
*Peer.* What! *your* motto?
*King.* The *Word* that has kept us apart
From the whole race of men. It is potent
And strong. "To thyself be *Enough*."
*Peer* (*crossing L.*).
This is madness! Absurd! You are raving.
*King.* There is no need to cut up so rough!
Accepting the motto, you've done it
Great credit. You've lived as a Troll.
(*Weeping.*) And I think you are very ungrateful
To turn from the kindly old soul
Who taught you the way to climb upwards.
To gather material wealth—
Your riches all flowed from our motto,
But you never owned up. Just by stealth
Have you used our great word—kept it secret.
*Peer.* A Hill-Troll—an egoist! I?
Is it true?—No! I cannot believe it!

*King* (** pulling out a bundle of newspapers*).
[You don't mean to say you deny
Your own actions? Look! Here are the papers!
You think we don't take them, maybe?
But we Trolls have our press and our critics.
*We* keep our eyes open! Just see
How the *Bloksbergen Post* here can praise you!
The *Heklefjeld Journal* as well!
Here's an article signed "Hoof, of Stallion."
And one, by a Troll, who can tell
Just exactly how you've been behaving.
He quotes your career as a proof
That one's deeds are of far more importance
Than mere outer marks, such as hoof,
Horns or tail; and he ends with a flourish,
And flaunts our great banner on high;
"Our *Enough* gives the hall-mark of Trolldom
To man!" That's the style!
(*Folds up papers.*)
*Peer.* He says *I*
Am a Hill-Troll?
*King.* It's proved—safe and certain!
*Peer.* That means—all my toil was in vain?—
All my travels and thrilling adventures
Were not worth the trouble and pain?
Just a waste of shoe-leather? Far better
Have stayed in the Rondë instead,
And accepted my bride—lived in comfort!
To think that the life I have led
Leads to nothing at all—is a failure!—
I'll never believe it, not I!
You are raving, old man!—Stuff and rubbish!]
(*Giving* KING *coin.*)
Here! Buy some tobacco. Good-bye!
*King* (*seizing him*). Prince Peer!
*Peer.* Let me go, you are doting.
Be off to the hospital, do!
*King.* It's useless. There's no one will have me.
They say I'm a myth; and it's you
And your like who have taught them to say so,

Discrediting, doubting what's true!
They won't even believe in my kingdom—
I'm "fabulous"—only exist
In the fairy-tale fancies of poets!
I'm out of date, lost in a mist
Of wild theories.

*Peer.* Ay, very likely,
But others could tell the same tale.

. . . . . .

*King.* Oh, come now! you mustn't be heartless!
You'll let better feelings prevail.
Just a trifle?

*Peer.* I can't. I am bankrupt.
Cleaned out.

*King.* Then I'll e'en to the town.

*Peer.* Do you hope to find work there?

*King.* I'll chance it.
I feel pretty sure I'll go down
With the folks who are fond of the playhouse.

*Peer.* You'll make quite a hit, I daresay.
Greet the public from me! Say I'll write them
A bitter true drama some day.

CURTAIN.

NOTE.—*The above scene, and the dialogue with the* LEAN PERSON, *which follows, are two of the most racily written passages in the play; and in attempting to preserve something of their vigour and go, the transcriber has found it necessary to give a very free rendering of several of the lines—sometimes expanding them and sometimes telescoping them, and not infrequently altering their position in the speeches; but care has been taken not to introduce anything foreign to the meaning and spirit of the text.*

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## SCENE III.

* *At cross-roads.*

*Peer* (*seated L.*).

So the doom of the Troll is pronounced, straight and plain.
Their "Enough" blocks the way. To such need have you come,
My good friend, as you never have dreamt of before.

The whole vessel's a wreck. One must float with the spars
As one can; but—the scrap heap? Ah! never—no, no!

[*Enter the* MOULDER.

*Moulder* (* *at the cross-roads*).
Peer Gynt, have you found me your witness?
*Peer.* So soon?
[All too short was the time! Is our meeting-place here?
*Moulder.*
Ay, the cross-roads. I see by your face you have failed.
'Tis as plain as a fresh-written parchment, to read.]
*Peer.* I got tired of the hunt—and bewildered besides.
*Moulder.* [By the hunt that was vain—led to nothing?
*Peer.* Just so.
It was dark in the wood! You could hardly expect——
*Moulder.* Yet I met an old man trudging wearily on.
Shall we call him?
*Peer.* No, no!—He was—drunk, I believe.
*Moulder.* But perhaps he might help you?
*Peer.* No!—let him alone.
*Moulder.* Then we'd better begin. (*Opening tool-chest.*)
*Peer.* Won't you answer me first?]
A last question!—what is it, this being one's self?
*Moulder.* [A singular question!—most odd in the mouth
Of a man who but now——
*Peer.* Come!—an answer, I beg.]
*Moulder.* Man is only himself, Peer, by slaying himself.
But that answer, I fear me, is lost upon you.
So we'll put it like this: If you would be yourself,
Stand forth as a man who fulfils the intent
Of the Master—whose banner displays His design.
*Peer.* But suppose that a man never sees that intent—
Never learns the design of his life?
*Moulder.* He must strive
With his might and his main to divine it.
*Peer.* Divine?
[But how often divinings mislead us! And we
In deep waters must flounder before we sight land.
*Moulder.* Ay!—divining amiss is a danger indeed!
In these waters you speak of, the devil himself
Finds the fish that rise freely to swallow his bait.]

*Peer.* This is complex. I think I'll abandon my plea.
It's not easy to prove it—this owning of self.
But suppose after all—I've a conscience, you see,
And it pricked and tormented me sorely, just now,
When I wandered alone—— As a *sinner*, perhaps——?
*Moulder.* [You seem bent on beginning all over again.
*Peer.* Not at all! I have something quite new to confess.
I have sinned in great style—both in word and in deed.
Oh! you haven't a notion! My thoughts and desires
Were unspeakable, *damnable* truly!
*Moulder.* Maybe.]
You must show me the schedule.
*Peer.* I'll find out a priest,
And confess with all speed—get a voucher from him.
*Moulder.* If you can bring me that, there's escape for you yet;
[But my orders were strict.
*Peer.* Still, the paper is old,
And I daresay it dates from a long time ago.
I once lived with a carelessness shocking to see;
Loafed about, playing prophet, and trusting to fate!—
May I try once again?
*Moulder.* Well, but really——!
*Peer.* Look here,
My good man!—I am sure you can spare me the time!
What's your haste? For you really can't plead overwork
In a district like this, where the air is so pure
That the parson who wrote down its annals declared,
"People die very seldom down here in the dale."[1]]
*Moulder.* At the cross-roads once more I shall see you again.
[The next cross-roads; but not one step farther!
*Peer.* All right;
I shall catch a priest somehow or other, ere then!
(* *He starts running.*)]

NOTE.—*From the dramatic point of view the above dialogue simply delays the action of the play, and should be cut as suggested, if given at all. From the didactic point of view some of the lines are extremely important, as giving the meaning attached by the*

[1] *Cf.* the assertion of many psychics that part of the astral plane is an exact reproduction, in astral matter, of the physical plane. Peer, though dead, feels that he is still in Norway.

*poet to the oft-repeated phrase "being oneself." If the cuts are adopted, the* MOULDER *goes out R., after "see you again," leaving* PEER *on.*

* *A heather-clad hillside, with a path, following the windings of the ridge.*

*Peer.* Who'd have thought that the tale of one's sinning
Would come to one's aid and befriend?
No change for the better, I fear me.
The frying-pan's bad—but to end
In the fire is still worse. Well, the proverb
Says, "Never say die!"
(* *A* LEAN PERSON, *in a priest's cassock, kilted up high, and with a birding-net over his shoulder, comes hurrying along the ridge.*)
Who goes there?
It's a priest with a net on his shoulders.
A parson—what luck! I declare
I am simply the spoilt child of fortune.
So-ho! Mr Pastor, good day.
You have come down a pathway that's faulty?
*Lean Person.* Quite so; but where wouldn't one stray
In the hope of a soul?
*Peer.* Very true, sir.
There's someone that's heavenward bound?
*Lean Person.* Not at all. In another direction
He wanders. (*With satisfaction.*)
*Peer* (*puzzled*). Indeed? Most profound
Is my sympathy. May I go with you
A bit of the road?
*Lean Person.* That's well said.
I'm a sociable fellow; delighted.
*Peer.* I want your advice.
*Lean.* Go ahead.
*Peer.* You see here a decent old body
Who lives in accordance with law.
No fetters or chains ere have bound me,
And yet I'm aware there's a flaw
In the web of my life. It so happens
I've failed in some way to find rest.
I've missed the true pathway and stumbled.

*Lean.* A thing that may chance to the best.
*Peer.* Exactly. And though they're but trifles——
*Lean.* But trifles?
*Peer.* Mere bagatelles, ay!
*Lean.* Then you're wasting my time with your talking.
Far better just bid me good-bye.
I'm not quite the man that you thought me.
Just look at my fingers for proof.
*Peer.* The nails are extremely developed!
*Lean.* Exactly. And what's that?
*Peer.* A hoof?
*Lean.* So I flatter myself.
*Peer* (*raising his hat*). Why, good gracious!
I'd freely have given my word
You were merely a wandering parson.
And now I've the honour—— Absurd!
Why, I ought to have understood better.
I' faith, when one speaks with the king,
One despises the slaves in the kitchen.
*Lean.* Your hand, my good friend; there's a ring
In your voice that's unprejudiced, truly.
Say on. In what way can I serve?
Never ask me for riches, however.
'Twere useless, indeed. For observe
Things are wretchedly slack with you mortals.
In souls there's scarce anything done,
The business has dwindled to zero.
*Peer.* The race has improved?
*Lean Person.* No, my son,
It has sunk in a way that is shocking.
In fact, the majority end
In a ladle that's kept for re-casting.
*Peer.* I've heard of that ladle, my friend,
And, to cut the thing short, that same ladle
Is what makes me ask your advice.
*Lean.* Speak out.
*Peer.* Are you very exacting?
The fact is—I want——
*Lean* (*grinning*). Something nice?
A good harbour of refuge?

*Peer.* You've guessed it.
Divined it before I could speak.
You're hard up for clients at present?
Then take me in—just by the week.
I shouldn't insist upon wages.
A treatment that's friendly, that's all.
*Lean.* A fire in your room, for example?
*Peer.* Well—not too much fire; it might pall.
(LEAN ONE *chuckles, going back up stage.*)
(*Crossing R.*) And the chief point is personal freedom.
I cannot be bound down to stay.
The chance of a change for the better
Must still remain open.
*Lean.* Heyday!
My dear friend, have you any idea
How many there are who demand
These identical terms when they're leaving
The earth?
*Peer.* Still, I'm one of the band
That has earned free admission below-stairs.
*Lean* (*sitting L.*). Mere trifles, you said, now and then!
*Peer.* In a way; but—with shame I recall it—
I've trafficked in slaves.
*Lean.* There are men
Who have trafficked in souls; ay, and even
Have sold and enslaved their free-will,
Yet bungled it, failed to find entrance.
*Peer.* I've traded in idols; and still,
When I think of these heathen, encouraged
In all sorts of errors, I see
That I've sinned in the matter most gravely.
*Lean.* Mere wish-wash again! Why, bless me!
We just laugh at all that. There are people
Who ship off things gruesome and grim
In their books, and their art and their sermons;
Weird figures, fantastic and dim
In their outlines; mis-shapen in structure,
False, hollow—they worship them too.
Yet they're out in the cold.
*Peer.* Yes, but listen!

I've posed as a prophet.
*Lean* (*amused*). What!—you?
You were far from home then, I will wager!
Most people who dabble in dreams
Such as these find their way to the ladle.
(*Rising.*) And so will you too, as it seems.
(*Going R.*) I can't possibly house you.
*Peer.* But listen!
I'm cowardly; on my way home
I was shipwrecked and clinging for safety
To part of a raft. I had come
To the surface and found that quite near me
The cook struggled too, and held fast.
It was my life or his, and I triumphed—
I had almost to push him, at last!
*Lean.* What rubbish is this? *Had* to push him?
And did it—*almost*—— Why, what stuff!
Did you do it or not? Half-way measures
Are useless. Be thorough.[1] Enough.
[Do you think I would ever waste fuel
On spiritless trash such as you?
There, don't lose your temper. Excuse me—
It's best to be frank—and it's true.
You must simply submit to the ladle.
(PEER *sits, discouraged, L.*)
So face it with courage. Look here!
What is it you'd gain if I lodged you?
You'd keep you're own memory clear?
Well, granted you would; let me ask you,
Good sir, *what's your memory worth?*
Has it food for continued reflection?
Have you stored it, down there, upon earth,
With anything really worth keeping?
Not you. Poor and meagre the fare
You would live upon. Lukewarm and lifeless
The retrospect—neither despair
Nor fair hope with its smiles and its laughter
Will give you promotion as yet.
Nor sorrow nor joy bring its lesson.

[1] If cut is taken, Lean One exit here.

You've just enough reason to fret
In a half-hearted way.
*Peer.* It is written
It's only the wearer can tell
Where the shoe gives a pinch.
*Lean.* Very true, sir.
And that reminds me! It were well
To be stirring myself, for time presses.
(*Chuckling.*) I've no need for more than one shoe,
Praise be!—but for all that I'm active,
And have to be, now and then, too!
I'm after a roast just at present
That is said to be juicy and fat.
*Peer.* And on what sort of sins did it fatten?
*Lean.* I'm not very sure about that,
But rumour says, day-long and night-long
He has striven to be just himself.
*Peer.* And that brings such folk to *your* parish?
*Lean.* Yes; sometimes a place on my shelf
May be reached, if their method and manner
Of being themselves suits our book.
There's a right and a wrong way in all things.
I daresay you've taken a look
At these portraits they turn out in Paris,
Just made by the light of the sun?
There's a positive stage in the process
But also a negative one.
The likeness is latent, potential;
As soon as the ray strikes the glass,
The treatment that follows evolves it,
And perfects it till it can pass
As a fairly-wrought picture, reflecting
The image impressed at the first.
To continue:—the soul that has wandered
Down-hill, and has got to the worst,
Has worked on the negative only,
And that is a thing none can see
And admire; but it needn't be useless,
If properly doctored by me.
I wash it, I steam it, I scour it,

I treat it with sulphur, and lo!
There's the image appears as it should be;
But if the whole plate is no go—
A mere smudge—neither sulphur availeth
Nor anything else.
*Peer.* And the name
Of the man who has earned this fine treatment?
*Lean.* His name's Peter Gynt.
*Peer.* What! the same?
He's himself?
*Lean.* Well, he vows it and swears it.
*Peer.* He's one to be trusted, is Peer.
*Lean.* Then you know him?
*Peer.* Yes, after a fashion.
One meets such a mixed lot down there!
*Lean.* I'll be off. Pray, where was it you saw him?
*Peer.* The Cape of Good Hope.
*Lean.* Ugh! The Cape?
I just hate that same Buona Speranza!
All mission-fields give me the shivers!
But still—I can't let him escape.
[* *Rushes off, southwards.* Exit, *L.*
*Peer.* The stupid old owl! He'll be cheated.
I do love to humbug a goose.
He to give himself airs! and to lord it!
It strikes me he isn't much use
At his trade. Still, I needn't be scoffing.
I've not much to boast of just now—]
Unsafe in the saddle!—ay, truly.
[Despised by self-owners. And how
Will it end? Just one note and then silence?
(* *A star falls.*)
One moment of life—like yon star
That just flashes and falls into darkness.
Ah! radiant brother! afar
Let me greet thee before it is over!]
(* *Draws himself together, shuddering.*)
Is none found to help? Not below?
Nor above in the wonderful heavens?
Can souls be so poor they can go

Back to nothingness—lost in the shadows ?
Thou beautiful earth ! Ah, forgive
That I trampled in vain on thy verdure !—
Thou glorious sun ! Can we live
By thy light, yet ignore it, ungracious ?
Hast thou shone on a hut that was bare,
Empty, desolate—worthless ? They tell me
The owner has never dwelt there.
[Great Sun !—wondrous Earth in your beauty !—
Both marvellous !—Why were you fain
To give radiance and life to the mother
That bore me—and bore me in vain ?
All nature is lavish in giving,
But the soul is a niggard—ay me !
And it grudges the price that is asked it
For birth and for being.—Maybe
I have time still to climb to the summit—
The dizziest peak up above—
And to look on the sun, as he rises,
And shines o'er the land that I love—
The land of my dreams, that was promised !—
The land that is lost to me now !
I shall see it ! and gaze till I'm weary,
Then gently sink down, and allow
The great snow wreaths to pile themselves o'er me.
A finger shall write in the drift,
" Here lies one who was Naught "—and then—after ?
Who knows ?—Clouds may gather—or lift !]

(Church-Goers *singing on the forest path.*)

[1] O morning ever blessed,
When tongues of flame descending
Brought life and light to men—
Down-rushing, never-ending.
From earth to heaven above
Our joyous song we'll raise,
And chant our Saviour's love,
His glory and His praise.

*Peer* (* *crouching, as in terror*).
I can't face it. Too late for repentance !

[1] Tune " Nun Danket alle Gott."

For hope far too late!—woe betide.
The sands of the desert are round me.
I was dead—dead and gone—ere I died.
(*Goes back despairing.* * *Tries to slink in among the bushes, but comes upon the cross-roads.*)

NOTE.—IBSEN'S *direction here is of course impossible on an actual stage. The change of place should be indicated by the disclosing of* SOLVEIG'S *hut at the back. The effect sought should be that of mists rolling away.*

[*Enter* MOULDER, *L.*

*Moulder.* Good morrow! The list of your sinning!—
Is't ready, Peer Gynt, at the last?
*Peer.* I have sought far and wide—whistled, shouted
As hard as I could.
*Moulder.* You're downcast?
You've met no one at all in the forest?
*Peer.* A passing photographer strode
Down the path leading southward. I hailed him,
But naught he said lightened my load.
*Moulder.* And the respite is over. (*A bell tolls.*)
*Peer.* All's over!
The bird of the night scents the day.
Only hark to his hooting!
*Moulder.* They're ringing
For matins.
(SOLVEIG *sings in the hut the refrain of her Song of Faith.*)
*Peer.* And over the way
Shines a light ever clearer. What is it?
*Moulder.* Just light from a hut.
*Peer.* And that sound?
*Moulder.* It is only a woman who's singing
Alone.
*Peer.* I am saved! I have found
One who knows all the depths of my sinning—
Who'll tell you the tale and the sum
Of them all!
*Moulder* (* *seizing him*). Set your house in good order.
*Peer.* I will! It is here! I have come
To my own again. Hence!—I must enter.

Your ladle's too small for my crimes.
Were it huge as a coffin, I tell you,
They'd fill and o'erflow it!
*Moulder.* Betimes
You've bethought you. At last you remember.
Once more I am willing to wait;
But a third time we meet at the cross-roads.
Be ready—and come not too late. [*Exit* Moulder.
*Peer.* Oh! forward or back—it's as far!
Out or in—it's as cramped and as straight.
To come back—to go in—to go home!
(* *Takes a few steps on, but stops again.*)
Not for me!—The words echo around
Like a wild, never-ending lament.
"Roundabout," said the Boyg, "acquiesce."
(* *Again hears singing in the hut.*)
But—ah, no! for this one time at least
I'll go *through*. Though the way may be hard
And the path may be strait, I'll go *through*.

[* Solveig *appears, as he runs towards the hut. She stands in doorway, erect yet gentle, dressed for church, with a psalm-book, wrapped in a kerchief, and a staff in her hand.*]

*Peer* (* *flinging himself on the threshold*).
Hast thou doom for a sinner? Say on!
*Solveig.* He is here! oh, to God be the praise!
(* *Stretches out her arms as though groping for him.*)
*Peer.* Cry aloud! Utter bitter reproach.
I have sinned and been faithless to thee.
*Solveig.* I reproach thee with nothing—with naught.
(* *Gropes for him again, and finds him.*)
*Moulder* (* *behind house*).
Where's the list of thy sinning, Peer Gynt?
*Peer.* Cry aloud! Cry them out!
*Solveig.* Thou hast made
All my life as a beautiful song.
Blessëd art thou, that comest at last!—
And thrice blessëd this Whitsuntide morn!
*Peer.* Then I'm lost!
*Solveig.* There is One who can save.

*Peer.* Lost!—unless—— (*With a half tremulous * laugh.*)
Can you answer me this?
*Solveig.* Answer what?
*Peer.* 'Tis a riddle! Tell true.
Where was Peer—Peer *himself*, all this while?
*Solveig.* Where was Peer?
*Peer.* Since we parted. Ay, Peer,
With his destiny's seal on his brow—
As he sprang into being at first
As the thought of the great God above.
Canst thou tell me? If not, I must go—
Must return whence I came, to the mists.
*Solveig* (* *smiling*). Oh, that riddle is easy!
*Peer.* Say on!
Tell me all that thou knowest. Speak plain!
Where was *I*, the whole man, the true man?
Where was *I*, with God's seal on my brow?
*Solveig.* In my faith, in my hope, in my love.
*Peer* (* *starting back*).
What say'st thou? Ah, Peace!—these are words—
Only words! Thou art mother thyself
To the man that is there.
*Solveig.* That I am.
But—*who is his father*—if not
He, the Father above, who forgives
At the prayer of the mother?
*Peer* (* *a light shining on his face*). My wife!
And my mother! Thou pure one and true,
Hide me close in thy love evermore!
(* *Clings to her, and hides his face in her lap.*)
(* *The sun rises. A long silence.*)

*Solveig* (*singing softly*).

Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine!
I will watch as I rock the cradle.

The boy has been sitting on his mother's lap.
They two have been playing all the life-day long.

The boy has been resting at his mother's breast
All the life-day long. God's blessing on my joy!

The boy has been lying close to my heart
All the life-day long. He is weary now.

Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine!
I will watch as I rock the cradle.

*The Moulder* (* *behind house*).
Peer Gynt! at the cross-roads we meet again,
And then we shall see. Now I say no more.
*Solveig* (* *sings louder*).
I will watch as I rock the cradle.
Sleep and dream, dear boy of mine!

CURTAIN.

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